

JADAVPUR
JOURNAL OF
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2003-2004

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2003-2004

Editor

Swapan Majumdar

**DEPARTMENT OF COMPARATIVE LITERATURE
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CALCUTTA**

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Our Contributors

Comparative Literature in India suffered the cruellest blow this year at the sudden demise of SisirKummar Das (1936-2003), retired Tagore Professor of Bengali, Department of Modern Indian Languages, University of Delhi. Professor Das had been engaged in writing the history of Medieval Indian Literature for the Sahitya Akademi series to which he had contributed two magnificent volumes earlier. With renewed vigour he had already completed the chapters on the early phase of the period covering 800-1200 AD. The loss to the Indian academic world will be difficult to recover from in the near future. We are extremely grateful to Sm Susmita Das for making available to us the article printed here.

We are glad to notice that more and more teachers of single literature disciplines are gradually moving towards CL at least in their choices of topics of their critical explo-ations. Though for many it still remains a matter of bringing together two or more authors, issues and texts without the least concern for the methodology or tools of such researches, some of them have been keen on using the apparatuses of comparatistics. Avadesh Kumar Singh of the Institute of English & Comparative Literary Studies, Saurashtra University, Rajkot, Basavraj Nankar of Karnatak University, Dharwad, Jatindra Kumar Nayak of Utkal University, Bhubanesvar, Rabi Shankar Mishra of Sambalpur University, Bibhash Choudhury of Gauhati University – all belonging to the discipline of English – have been adepts in the technology of comparison.

Edwrd O Ako and Didier Coste, the two scholar contributors from abroad, and Indra Nath Choudhuri, the former Secretary of Sahitya Akademi, New Delhi, have dealt with the theoretical and applied areas of CL in their articles.

Amiya Dev, the former Vice-Chancellor of Vidyasagar University, Medinipur, Nrayan Mukherji of the Department of French, University of Calcutta and Swapan Majumdar – are all former students of the Jadavpur Department and are still actively engaged in fostering the cause of CL in India.

The Editorial Board gratefully acknowledges the services rendered by the recently retired Professor Manabendra Bandyopadhyay who had been one of the initiators of the *JJCL* and wish him a very happy and retired life.

BETWEEN THE ONE AND THE MANY: RETHINKING INDIAN LITERATURE *

Is Indian literature in the singular a misnomer? Should we speak of Indian literatures instead? Or is Indian literature a valid enough category without violating the Indian plurality of letters? These are questions that beset us today, more perhaps than before for the growing threat to the plurality of Indian culture. That India has many languages is not denied. That India has many literatures is also not denied. But the rhetoric of the majority preceding minorities may have a bearing on languages and literatures as well. We all know that Radhakrishnan's famous formulation of "Indian literature is one though written in many languages" (Sahitya Akademi's motto) was an outcome of the Nehruvian era, a translation indeed of its spirit of 'unity in diversity'. We also know that the call for 'national integration' that came later had a shift in emphasis with priority given to the nation that may not brook much diversity. The seeming literalness of the official introduction at a Sahitya Akademi forum, for instance, of a Manipuri or a Malayalam writer as an Indian writer writing in Manipuri or Malayalam might have been linked with that. And it is this rising inflection on the word Indian that might have led a Malayalam poet of my generation to quipping, "Indian literature is one *because* it is written in many languages." Now, if the nation were a proposition of internal integration alone it would not have been so precarious a matter as it is today being a proposition of immunity from outside and of diplomacy with other nations, especially for contending terrorism. A consequent rhetoric of solidarity may tend to smooth out the diversities that hang together. Hence this concern.

Acknowledgements are due to the Manipuri Sahitya Parishad for permission to print it here in advance. It was their Second Nilakanta Singh Memorial Lecture given at Imphal on 2 November 2003, and will be brought out by them at the time of the Third Lecture in 2005.

Obviously I have taken the two items of my title, the 'one' and the 'many', from the Sahitya Akademi's motto, but my purpose is different. I want to see if any dialectic is at work in them.

Once in a small town in another country I had to give a regular lecture to a young boy in answer to his query if 'Indian' was our language in India. He was not speaking out of ignorance alone but also out of analogy, for most countries he had heard of had a common language. In fact such analogies may also be in the minds of our sentinels of homogeneity. Yet it is in heterogeneity that we are situated, it is in heterogeneity that we have been thriving. Our literatures have their individual histories. But to say that is not to take a relativist position, for there have been interconnections. But the interconnections do not mean that a writer in an Indian language does not primarily belong to that language. He/she is located there, a successor to what has gone before and a contemporary to the other ongoing writing in the language. It is not improbable that a writer in one Indian language may be unaware of the writing in the other Indian languages. In any case that is not his/her principal concern. The principal concern is obviously the writing in his/her own language. And since all writing is addressed to a readership, the principal concern is also the readership in his/her own language, and not in other Indian languages, notwithstanding the possibility and the actualization of translation. We are told that the Bengali novelist Saratchandra was once so popular in translation in other Indian languages that Telugu readers, for instance, for a while thought him to be a Telugu writer. We can call this a travesty but a good enough travesty to attest to the truth of a readership, for readers' principal concern is with the writing in their language. And I have found that it is not easy to communicate Rabindranath Tagore's hold over us Bengalis to other Indian language readers. A scholar *extraordinaire* from Karnataka, a votary of Indian classics, once asked me if Tagore was indeed that great. His problem might have been that he had read Tagore in English and not in a Kannada translation. But a no less astute critic from North India whose knowledge of Tagore was much more intimate, felt that Tagore was a well-guarded Bengali secret. His feeling was genuine, for we Bengalis have not quite succeeded in establishing Tagore's Olympian greatness to other Indian language readers. Again, I am not quoting relativism but merely stressing the natural relation between a

writer and his/her milieu. I could have dodged the issue by citing the inadequacies of translation, but inadequacies notwithstanding I would not do that. Of course Tagore is an extreme example, but name anyone from any language and you have more or less the same problem. Usually it is the language reader that can fully appreciate a language writer's achievements.

Besides, these individual literatures are fairly localized and that may be an added argument for their autonomy. Also, the fact of an MIL being taught as the first language in these language-specific areas is complementary to this autonomy. But we must go a little slow here, for we may slip into a false analogy with European literatures that are autonomous entities though not immune to a broad common identity. There have been attempts in the past to view them together and there may be attempts again in the near future, with the currency euro striving for European ubiquity. At the moment such regional interests as Central European writing or Mediterranean literatures are forming in certain scholarly circles and research groups. In any case, overseas scholars sometimes bracket Indian and European literatures as instances of contained plurality. But I suppose wrongly so, for the Indian plurality is not similar to the European plurality. The idea of 'national literature' that was put forward in nineteenth century Europe, especially by Goethe in a conversation with Peter Eckermann in 1827 as the antithesis of 'world literature', applies to European literatures and not to Indian literatures. Indian literatures are not national in the sense of comprising every experience of every corner of the country, though they do have each a national importance. They are sometimes called regional literatures, hopefully not in a pejorative sense of only being fractions. The recent nomenclature of 'bhasha literatures' makes better sense though that too does not indicate if they have a national importance. I think the moot question here is if we have any literature/s besides them. Of course we have Sanskrit and English that are not 'bhasha' in our sense or regional in any sense. No matter how small their readership is, they may claim an Indian status, their reception not necessarily varying from one Indian region to another. However that does not make them either a national literature in the European sense. It is a pity that Indian literature—no room for any plurality there—is often identified overseas with Indian English literature alone. Salman Rushdie's recent verdict

was merely in line with this rhetoric of ignorance, perhaps of convenience as well. There is also another representation of Indian literature overseas, somewhat essentialist in spirit, that confines itself to the old Indologists' India and does not come this side of *GitaGovinda* (no interest either in the current Sanskrit writing).

What then is Indian national literature, or is there one in the sense of European national literatures? An absolute pluralist may say, all Indian literatures, both 'bhasha' and non-'bhasha', are national literatures, so there is no single Indian national literature. Identifying one out of them will be fostering hegemony. On the other hand an absolutist, and one without a brief for such hegemony, may say that Indian national literature or Indian Literature (with a capital L) is an abstract of Indian literatures and will be there as long as Indian literatures are there. However, the mode of abstraction may vary and we may come up with a number of corpuses marked 'Indian Literature'. Genres, themes, styles, chronology and some other determinants may be used, yet individual choices may be so different that no two corpuses would finally look alike. How indeed can two anthologies be the same as long as choice works? Of course if we forego our own choice and endorse the choice already made by the various synods of literary establishments, that is, string together prize titles, we may come up with the same corpus. But that will restrict our Indian Literature to the last half-century or so. Besides, accepting institutional judgement as the only judgement is tantamount to inviting regimentation and surely we cannot afford that under any circumstances. The best would be to accept the variety of corpuses; only we must not insist on the truth of their identity as Indian Literature. There are many anthologies of world classics, some pithy, some sprawling, and we have no quarrel with them as long as we do not take them as the 'true' representation of world literature. This surely is a bad analogy, absolutely wide off the mark, yet it may tell us that we are dealing with a loose category.

This brings us back to square one. Is there no Indian Literature then? Yet Sisir Kumar Das has posited an integrated History of Indian Literature. Was he chasing a wild goose? If we take a close look at the two volumes he has written of this history, 1800-1910 and 1911-56, we will not only get an answer to this question but also probably a key to our problem. Both these volumes have two parts, a narration

and a date chart. The date chart is a year-by-year chronicle of a whole range of literary events in all the twenty-two languages recognized by the Sahitya Akademi (in the first volume an additional twenty-third, Persian). It is out of the collation of such events that a pattern emerges as to the course of these literatures in the specified period. What Henry James once called the figure in the carpet came most alive with regard to some innovations in them. Sisir Kumar Das discovered that in some literatures they had come early, in some others, late. He proposed the double bind of *pro-plane* and *meta-plane* that forms a crucial part of his narration. He has called his narration plus date chart, his history, that is, *A History of Indian Literature* and it is quite obvious that his Indian Literature is an inference derived from the course taken independently by these twenty-two (or twenty-three) literatures. It is not the integer in the literal sense of an aggregate; it is as it were the spirit that moves them, the *moto spiritale* of Dante fame. I am not here to discuss Sisir Kumar Das's historiography. I have cited it apropos an understanding of Indian Literature. Nearly two decades ago K. M. George had attempted a similar understanding, but his two-volume *Comparative Indian Literature* was no more than an aggregation of scholarly assessments of fifteen Indian literatures (the number in the Eighth Schedule then) in a generic rationale. Indian literature there was merely the premise, the qualifier 'comparative' being the orientation. No clear understanding was actually worked out, one was invited to make an exercise for that out of the data provided by the team of scholars that had themselves no explicit notion of Indian literature as such. Yet in a way that was better than their all having one, for that would probably have created chaos—so many notions of Indian literature between two covers! K. M. George edited his project; Sisir Kumar Das wrote his. Hence the difference: in the former we begin with, in the latter we arrive at Indian Literature.

Is the Indian Literature thus arrived at an object and therefore of an independent existence? That is, can we describe it or narrate its career without referring to Indian literatures? No, because it underlies them. Besides, Sisir Kumar Das's narrative is one narrative woven out of the data, the mainstay of his history. (Ideally, it is possible to weave other narratives.) His singular takes life from his plural. He didn't have to meander between them. We recall that when the Sahitya Akademi was

founded, it was given a dual task without any tension between those two. In the first place it was to look after the interests of the individual literatures in Indian languages, in the second to foster interrelation between them. It was out of the latter that a sense of Indian Literature was to be advanced. The two thrusts in its motto, on 'many' and 'one', are thus intertwined: unless you have the many, you cannot have the one. Perhaps the above-quoted quip, "Indian literature is one *because* it is written in many languages", is really not a piece of absurdity: instead of maintaining a balance between the many and the one, it gives priority to the 'many'. The 'one' is to come in its wake. Now if we go by this priority and not quite see a distinct 'one', do we or do we not have some inter-literary intimations? Some two decades ago I argued that however self-contained, an Indian literature had a sense of another or more than one other Indian literature, whether through actual contact or by way of polygenetic affinities. I would not now stick to what I then identified as Assamese+, Tamil+, Panjabi+ and so on, rather speak of possible inter-literary receptions. A few years ago as then President of Sahitya Akademi, U. R. Anantha Murthy thought of gauging the response to such masterpieces as Tagore's *Gora* in other Indian languages or to an author of V. M. Vasheer's eminence— response either historically grooved or readily sounded through regional seminars. His recent citation at Neemrana of the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* as truly pan-Indian was not far from his earlier concern. I don't know if he would insist on an Indian Literature as such, but he would certainly not desist from the idea of togetherness for the literatures in Indian languages. Now, whether this togetherness can be translated into systemic terms is open to question, especially with the growing doubt in the grand narrative in theory circles. But day to day exercise in collation can be revealing as has been the experience of the Department of Modern Indian Languages of the University of Delhi, where they had a series of collateral studies in genres and themes. The Department of Comparative Literature at Jadavpur University has recently had a number of bilateral translation workshops that yielded a few inter-literary insights into the bargain. Other centres too are doing such fruitful work. And if we take stock of the collateral colloquia over the years we are sure to glean many insights of the same order. Perhaps it is in these bits rather than in any overall design thrust from above that we may locate

the togetherness of our literatures. And if we need to designate this togetherness by a name, maybe we can call it Indian Literature knowing full well that it is only a name and not a thing.

Obviously this togetherness is more apparent in certain genres, themes, periods and movements than others, bhakti being a signal instance. Its temporal and spatial dimensions were so enormous that even that *Padmapurāṇa* sloka mounted for it does not quite exhaust it: 'Utpanné Drāviḍe cāham Kamātake vṛddhimāgatā / sthitā kimcin Maharāṣṭre Gurjare jīrṇatām gatā / Vṛndāvanam punaḥ prāpya navīne surūpiṇī / jnatamaham yuvatī samyak śreṣṭharūpā tu sāmpratam'. Those who have drawn its map have found that it embraced a wider pan-Indian space than the five *mathas* founded by Sankara. And in time span too it was fabulous— from the sixth to the eighteenth century. In its dispensations also it was comprehensive: *saguṇa* and *nirguṇa*; Saiva, Vaishnava and Bhagavata; expressive of *aiśvarya* and *mādhurya*. Considering all this and, at the same time, its social importance in cutting down such barriers as caste and gender, a methodological question confronts us. Are we going to approach it straightaway as an Indian event, or as an event in individual literatures, perhaps primarily of polygenetic origin, but reaching out to one another and thus creating a semblance of convergence? Of course it is one thing to look back now and quite another to have a sense of the time when the event took place. The Bhakti scholars will be able to tell us of the extent to which these individual occurrences over the centuries were in contact with one another, or were they? I hope I am not making too fine a distinction between the potential of togetherness and its actualization, in other words, between an Indian Literature not to be and an Indian Literature to be.

When writers from various Indian literatures meet — and they meet quite often now — do they have a feeling that even while writing in their own languages, they are creating a common enough literature, that they can share a good deal? Or, when they go overseas on a delegation, and they do that every once in while now, do they all project a common literary identity, or does rhetoric take an absolute hold of them? Among themselves they do not usually understand one another's language, yet they have to put forward a homogeneous image— such are the demands of the nation! How different from Tagore's visits abroad! Besides, such delegations or even congregations on the Indian soil comprise only

a tiny minority of the writers in the various languages. And the logic of representation cannot possibly be stretched so far as to taking their commonality to be the commonality of the bulk of the writers. So however far they may insist on an Indian identity, their insistence alone will not confer an Indian identity on everyone. Also the immediate linguistic identity is incontrovertible and to deny it in the name of a bigger identity is tantamount to betrayal. And no writer can afford that. This is especially true of tribal languages that have recently been given a bulk recognition by the Sahitya Akademi. The reason is not far to seek. They have a close imprint of the community that may induce exclusiveness. Sisir Kumar Das has quoted in his *History* a moment from a twentieth-century novel where an unlettered tribal girl shows her absolute ignorance of 'Bharatvarsha' maybe because she has never moved out of her village and has had no occasion to hear of that. Yet she is not ignorant of her neighbourhood. I may like to read it as a sign of exclusiveness not uncommon to tribal communities. Now, if we overlook that exclusiveness and not count tribal writing to be worthy of our consideration, then we will have a lopsided view of our literature. In fact that exclusiveness can be symptomatic of a language writer's bonds to his or her language barring which no worthwhile writing is possible. Yet, how are we going to reconcile this potential exclusiveness with the togetherness that literatures in Indian languages seem to generate? Aren't they a contradiction in terms?

One can perhaps take a hint from the Sahitya Akademi periodicals, *Samkālīn Bhāratiya Sāhitya* and *Indian Literature*. The former is declared to be "a bi-monthly journal of Indian literature from 22 languages, in Hindi" and though the latter does not in so many words carry such a declaration, it is in practice the same, in English. In both, the 'Indian literature' is a quality rather than an entity, a nomenclature rather than a category. If it emerges as an idea, that will be not from any concerted rhetoric, but from the collation of the writing in the various languages. Of course the bulk of the writing is presented in the Hindi and English translations, comprising thereby a body of writing in Hindi and English, and on that count one may put forward the case of an Indian Literature. In fact a similar idea was once mooted, especially to promote a singular Indian Literature studies programme at an institutional level, on the analogy of an anthology made out of various

literatures in translation. Indeed it is possible to have in all our languages a similar Indian Literature in translation, so to speak, a chosen archive of Indian literatures. The sooner the better, for not only would it give us readers in any one Indian language an idea, no matter how incomplete or incomprehensive, of the literature in other Indian languages but also help us not recognize any unitary Indian Literature hastily thrust from above. The lure of the latter is not entirely uncommon among cultural policy-makers who tend to have a summary approach to the individual literatures. And it has been found that those of us who are not rooted in our own language are prone to this summary approach. The role of the 'link language' too is sometimes overplayed — English command may give us a semblance of authority in etching out an easy overview of the literatures. And a sort of Indian literary-cultural jet set is ever in the making. Neutralizing that with a parallel jet set is not possibly the answer. What is needed instead is an access to the critical ambience in the languages themselves and to the ever-emerging debates there, and ideally in one's own language. However, Hindi or English can be an *ad interim* link before a critical archive too is built up in the languages from their neighbours' perception of themselves. That an exposure to such perceptions is necessary for collation of two or more literatures can be illustrated by the following instance. I was once part of a seminar on *prayogvād* where a number of literatures were being examined — it was a case of collation. Since the hosts were from Panjabi, they saw *prayog* posterior to *pragati*, almost as a reaction to it, and that was the format they had offered for the seminar. But in Bangla, I did not find the same; I saw a lot of *prayog* prior to *pragati*, some simultaneous *prayog* and *pragati*, and some also posterior — that is, no neat pattern was as such available. Any overarching of this kind, on the basis of one or two literatures, or even maybe on an analogy from outside, say western literature, may land us on a wrong reading of our literatures. And surely that cannot be validated by the argument of Indian Literature being the highest common factor of Indian literatures!

Neither the aggregate nor the highest common factor nor any abstract on any principle whatsoever, of the literatures in Indian languages, is Indian Literature or Indian national literature in the European sense. The aggregate is only a logical proposition, materially intangible. The highest common factor is reductive and minimal, denying

the rich variety of individual literatures. An abstract is a mere apology, fit for a niche in the world literature library, no matter how big, yet awfully selective comprising only those that answer a given taste — indeed an undependable affair. Of course there is no harm in anthologies and we all may have our own anthologies of Indian literatures (Sahitya Akademi has already brought out one each from classical, medieval and modern periods), but we cannot possibly designate any such anthology to be the one and only Indian Literature. The most we can say is that we have our own version of Indian Literature. But we should be on our guard that we do not usurp any epistemology. Not being Bharatvarsha incarnate we have no right to that. Fragments are we, but fragments that have a life of their own and that steer together. That is no mean identity. In a personal homage to the memory of the late deceased Bhisham Sahni, the Malayalam poet O. N. V. Kurup has recalled the more than ‘friendly’, ‘brotherly’ affection they had for one another as writers. I would like to take that as a symbol for the togetherness of our literatures that I have been speaking of. O. N. V. Kurup doesn’t have to write in Hindi and Bhisham Sahni didn’t have to write in Malayalam. Another late deceased poet, Subhash Mukhopadhyay, felt so deeply for his language, Bangla, that he crusaded from time to time for its wider use in public life in West Bengal, and yet he had an all-India presence and was Subhash-da to many poets from other Indian languages. It may sound contradictory, yet it seems unless one is rooted in one’s language one doesn’t attain an Indian identity. And since the Indian identity is born out of the togetherness of Indian literatures, it may be necessary that Indian literatures are exclusive domains of the languages they are made out of. Hope, as I said above, I am not slipping into relativism, but we must be Manipuri writers and, first and foremost, Manipuri readers in order to be party to Indian Literature. For, once again, Indian Literature is no entity outside Indian literatures, it is their overall identity, their generic status. The singular is not in clash with the plural. The singular is an honorific title that we have to our plurality. Indian literatures are Indian literatures, but Indian literatures are also Indian Literature.

**BEYOND THE MERE QUARREL BETWEEN
THE MOTHER AND DAUGHTER-IN-LAW:
RE/CONSIDERING NILKANTH'S ŚĀŚUVAHUNĪ LADĀĪ (1866)**

In the Chapter VIII entitled “Stri Kelvani” (The Education of Women) of *England in Musafirinu Varnan* (The Description of Journey in England), one of the earliest travelogues in Gujarati, written in 1862, Mahipatram Roopram Nilkanth writes about an English family and familial relationship particularly between mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law.

All arrangements are made for a separate home before marriage. There is no tradition of parents, brothers or other relatives staying (with the newly wed couple). They live together as a family until they are married, but after the marriage they have to follow the tradition of setting up their own house. Due to it the great misery that the Hindu daughters-in-law have to suffer, the pain and ill-feeling that the quarrel between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law creates in the family, the pain due to wrangling between older and younger sisters-in-law, and the anguish caused by indifference and taunts between sisters-in-law (*nanad* and *bhaujai*) — all this English women do not have to suffer. The mother-in-law tries to offer words of wisdom by poking her nose to remove defects and the mother of the girl does come to pour her prudence, but in the total sum they do not exercise any influence. The other advantage of it is that the people learn to be independent. (Nilkanth 1862: 98-99)

During his one year long stay in England Nilkanth had a first-hand experience of English society, and studied closely the structures and institutions — material and psychological — economic, political, social, educational and cultural that not only propped up English society but made it one of the most powerful nations of the world in the second half of the 19th century. While studying and observing English society he was indirectly, and on many occasions directly, comparing

them with their counterparts in Gujarat in particular and India in general in the later part. He used his travelogue to study and observe English society and 'imagined' his own society and country to be one without lacking the positive attributes so that it becomes as progressive and dynamic as the master's society. The Master's society was his model.

In the process of his engagement with the larger unit like society he did not oversight the smaller entities within it like family, importance of familial harmony particularly between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law, and the need for education for women. His concern for social reform narrowed down to familial reform, suggesting that happy families would lead to a happy society, and also that the happiness of the family depends on harmonious relationship particularly between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law. Mahipatram transformed this concern of his into a full-fledged thematic preoccupation by grafting the form of novel in Gujarati to serve his end of social reform.

In his "An Appeal to My Educated Countrymen" he introduced the theme by referring to the pitiable condition of daughters-in-law described in the *Bombay Gazette* dated 24th April 1873:

One of the most remarkable and characteristic features of Indian female domestic life that we know of is the relationship of the daughter-in-law and mother-in-law. (Nilkanth 1866: 23)

He saw the prevalence of the problem in the whole country, for every female in India with the rarest exception is either a daughter-in-law or mother-in-law, as he himself was aware, through the period of life from childhood to old age. He further stated,

There is nothing in the relationship itself that can excite surprise, but, when viewed in connection with the state of native society, and the institution of marriage of the country, it will be found that it is the relationship what more than any other debases the female mind and prevents the women of Indian from rising to their proper level in the social scale. (25)

Nilkanth was pained at the ill treatment meted out to a bride at the hands of mother-in-law and sister-in-law, as their lives were marked by 'drudgery' and 'scullery'. Though the *Gazette* speaks of the problem at the national level, he found its specific 'unparalleled' evidence in the Patidar castes in the then Ahmedabad and Kaira Collectorates and in

the Anuvilu Desais of the Surat District. The barbaric cruelty with which the daughters-in-law were treated was inhuman to him.

He referred to the common saying that speaks of the sad state of the daughter-in-law, "...the death of a daughter-in-law is of as little consequence as that of a female house rat".(27) His 'appeal' is a pained soul's plea against polygamy, child marriage, child widow and low status of daughter-in-law in the family and society that he considered 'rotten at the very core'.(31) In fact the condition of daughter-in-law was of serious concern for him, as it is the mother of all problems that eat up the peace and happiness like cancer. He saw reformation of the society in the reformation of the state and status of women. His focus was on reforming the family whose foundation rests on women in it, particularly on daughter-in-law, that is the prospective mother and mother-in-law as well. Indirectly Mahipatram was trying to subvert the structures of the patriarchal society by bringing in the daughter-in-law into the center of his social concern. Another thing that deserves to be mentioned here is that apart from the oppressive patriarchal social structures, and inhuman sadist mother-in-law and sisters-in-law, the novelist questions the role of the Englishmen who prided themselves at being called reformers. To support my last point let me take the case of child marriage, an evil that still plagues Indian society. Nilkanth was against child marriage in which the girl or bride was the worst sufferer. The Englishmen 'pitied' but did not enact a law against it, something that they could have done. He wrote in his 'Appeal':

The institution of child marriage is detested by even Englishmen...And this is all the Englishman usually knows about the institution of child marriage. His pity for a poor helpless child ends just where it should begin. Having seen the young wife enter the house of the husband, all that the Englishman knows about her is that she is domesticated among relatives in some kind of way. But the domestic circle around the wife of twelve years is composed of relatives by law. Blood relatives have no right of admission there; they may be and are frequently excluded. (28-29)

Nilkanth punctures the myth of Englishmen as messiahs of reformation. Not all Englishmen were really interested in the welfare of Indian people. Else they could have enacted law against an evil

like child marriage or could have passed a bill enacting laws regarding re-marriage for which Raja Ram Mohun Roy had advocated.²

The novel revolves around Sunder, the daughter of Shivilakehmi and Vadnagara, Nagar Brahmin Vireshwar of Nagarwada Street of Modasa town of Ahmedabad district. She had almost all the attributes that a young lady of the time was supposed to possess in the beginning of the 18th century. She was beautiful, could read and write in Devnagari script, sing and dance and had learnt *Aditiyapath* by heart. After her marriage with Harinand at the age of nine, her calamitous life began. The family included Ramanand, her father-in-law, Anpoorna, the mother-in-law, Kamala, the sister-in-law, married to Vejianand, the elder brother of Harinand. Sunder's life of eye-searing drudgery was aggravated by the barbaric behavior of her mother-in-law and sister-in-law. Her status in the family was that of an unpaid servant. Since her husband had more faith in her cunning mother and sister, so being misled by them, he used to beat his wife. To add to her physical and emotional torture, he visited a kept. He gifted his wife's anklets to his kept and blamed Sunder for losing them. This accusation led to the quarrel between Sunder and her mother-in-law. The Brahmin husband, though knowing the truth, beat his wife for no fault of hers. The wife suffered for the sins of her husband. Despite this the poor wife wanted to please her husband. She wanted to free him from the evil influence of her husband's kept and bring him under the spell of her own charm. She sought the help of a black magic practicing fakir at the advice of her issueless sister-in-law Chandra who had been visiting him for begetting a child.

The saint of Zamala Pir trapped her in his vicious design. The Brahmins reached the scene then and the Pir made Sunder escape through the rear door. She too tried to run away from there and got too tired to move herself further. In such moments Hasankhan Pathan sheltered her. He kept her in the service of her Begum. Since Hasankhan had no child, his wife asked him to marry Sunder after bringing her into his religious fold. Khan rejected his wife's proposal and arranged proper medical treatment for Sunder who was injured in her head by Harinandan. The Pir was tried in court and punished for his misdeeds. The treatment for the injury suffered by Sunder did not work, and she died. Harinandan was also punished and sent to jail, though he repented in the end. Somehow he was freed from jail. However, his family

had been ostracized from the caste. The Nagar caste was willing to readmit the family if the family hosted a feast for the members. The feast was arranged and when the Brahmins were relishing the feast, a thunderstorm struck. Commenting on the greed of the Brahmins for free food, the novelist wrote:

After bathing themselves they (the Brahmins) sat in a line. As salt and pickles were being served, it began to drizzle and the wind began to blow. Some profligate libertine began to say, 'Good great Brahmins', ghee will stay and it would be worth relishing, for it would be solidified with water after being served... The happiness of shameless *bhudev* (god of earth) i.e. Brahmins knew no bounds....

The Brahmins began to eat and the wind gathered so much momentum that the sky was covered with dust and the utensils containing various dishes were layered with dust. Even then the Bhattis kept eating. They got up only when tiles began to fly and fall on them. The foreheads of some of them were injured and so they had to leave with their bellies only half full. Everyone must have stomachached at least one quarter of seer of dust. As they got up, filth fell off. So they ran helter-skelter wherever they could. Women shouted and children cried. Annapurna began to beat her breast and said, 'God knows whose curse it is on us that the Nagar caste is painfully returning home without eating the feast properly. Ramanand said, 'Let it be. What can be human beings do before God's desire? It must have been the fate of these Brahmins to swallow the dust today. How can God's wish be proved false? You reap what you sow. Veejianand said that if a wicked mother-in-law causes quarrel in the family, then she is bound to be disgraced like this. You did not allow the newly married bride to live with peace. This is the consequence. (145) ³

Sunder suffered psychologically and ultimately physically. The other evil characters did not suffer physically the way poor Sunder did and the novelist may be blamed for lack of poetic justice. However, all characters by the end of the novel realize that they stood exposed in each others (or in God's all-seeing) eyes. The consequent disgrace was worse than death, for which disgraced Annapurna, her fatalist husband Ramanand, and Vijanand subscribing to the Karma theory had their own reasons.

True it is that the novelist could not chart out poetic justice at least in the case of Sunder, but he could to a certain measure, change the fate of the daughter-in-law imprinted in the psyche of the common people in the form of the saying that the writer himself had quoted:

Damdiki rai, sasu vahuki ladai
Adhiroti chorai, khune baithkar khai
Sasu marva dhai, vare kuvaman gerai (24)

(Like mustard seeds for a farthing is the quarrel between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law. The daughter-in-law stole half a *roti*, and ate in a corner. The mother-in-law ran to beat her, and the daughter-in-law fell into a well.)

Amidst these explanations the writer brings out the worst aspect of the mother-in-law Anapoorna's character that was more concerned about her family's feast offered to the caste for re-admission in the caste but did not care for the young daughter-in-law. The novelist ridiculed the hypocritical subscription to pseudo value-system of his contemporary society. He further hammered the final nail in the coffin of decadent Brahmanism, eaten up by its own greed and ritualism. The author condemned the behavior of decadent unindustrious Brahmin caste. In fact, the author himself belonged to it, and it seems that he seems to take symbolic revenge against his own caste that had ostracized his family, admitted it and then again ostracized it in 1866. And it was during the five turbulent years after his return from England that his caste tormented him and his family. His aim, however, was not merely revenge but bringing about reformation in it, which is possible only by shocking and disturbing it from its existing state of malaise.

Apart from the Brahmins the writer criticizes follies of other castes and religions. He writes:

Kag vahalu Kumbh jal, patel vehali jatar
Brahimin vahala ladawa, ne mian ne vahali patar.

(Crow loves water of a pitcher, Patel loves his caste, Brahmin loves sweetmeats, and Muslim loves dancing girl.)

Sauvahuni Ladāi is the first social, if not the first, novel in Gujarati. It gives the impression of being concerned with history but the facts are otherwise. It is located in pre-British colonial Mughal Indian period,

in the presence of Aurangzeb. By doing so he thought of saying whatever he wanted, to his countrymen without displeasing the then rulers. Nilkanth seems to have made a harsh comment on the Muslims but here he quoted a saying that speaks of the general perception of the Muslims in the society in the age of the composition of the novel i.e. 1860's and the time of action in the novel, i.e., the first decade of the 18th century when the Mughal empire had reached its acme during the rule of Aurangzeb and was on the wane.⁴ Subsequently, almost one century and a half of the Muslim rule, contrasted with the new English rule, was found to be less effective and progressive, and even a source of different evils at least in the larger creative psyche, as Jamal in G. M. Tophthi's *Sarasvatichandra*, and Thagchacha in *Ālālā* are villainous characters. Pathan in Neelkanth's novel stands out as a unique character amidst a few positive characters in the 19th century, as one does not come across many positive characters in the second half of the 19th century.

Though Sai of Zamala Pir is a negative character representing such practitioners of black magic as would beguile simpletons, Mahipatram is credited with creating one of the most positive Muslim couples in Hasan Khan Pathan and his Begum. He is an epitome of qualities attributed to a true Pathan. Even when his wife asks him to marry Sunder, he does not follow her advise. He shelters her and takes full care — and provides protection, medical treatment and psychological support. He tells her stories to solace her anguished mind. The same Muslim Pathan becomes the instrument of punishment for the perpetrators of injustice against Sunder. The Pathans' chivalry, their paternal care, their support physical and emotional — their humanity and sense of justice, portrayed by Mahipatram is unparalleled at least in 19th century Indian literature.

Pathan's stories, that he wove to divert Sunder's attention, form a pregnant sub-text of the novel; they are snugly implanted within the main text. They broaden the novel's perspective, as they bring two other higher castes i.e. the Rajputs and businessmen in discussion. The businessmen are intelligent and the Rajputs stupid. Else how would the former be so rich and prosperous and the latter, despite their bravery, lose their states and status to the Muslims and later on to the English. The novelist remarked through his narrator, and listener of the

story of the Rajput whose wife rescues the situation for her husband and herself.

Sunder says that the Rani was very clever and beautiful. Pathan says that the Rajputs are fools but their women are wise and intelligent. True that the Rajputs were brave warriors but stupid. But surprising it is that the Rajput women are virtuous and educated. It said, "an intelligent woman gets a foolish husband and a foolish woman gets an intelligent husband; one that is dearer begets cheaper and cheaper begets dearer one". The Rajput women are wise but their male children are foolish, the wife of a *vania* is a foolish chatterbox and her male children are intelligent and wise. Buffaloes are dearer but their male calves are cheaper. Cows are cheap but their male calves are dearer. (131)

The statement is a commonsensical comment on the fall of the Rajputs, the caste that was entrusted the task of protecting the territories of the country from foreign invasion. The sayings such as these are accepted in most of the places by common people after being verified for a longer period of time. And there is much truth at least in the above referred saying, for the fact is that the Rajput in most of the cases did not have 'historical sense' making it difficult for them to learn from their past experiences. Further, they fought against the enemies without paying much attention to their warfare. They took pride in sacrificing their lives and fought against enemies that pragmatically subscribed to no systems of values, while these people stuck to their otiose notions. Hence, the novelist makes his Pathan observe on the stupidity of the Rajputs and substantiates with evidences that are not part of historical consciousness but of folk wisdom. Congruous it may be to mention here that Gujarat had many kings and other Rajputs who would have strengthened this impression of the novelist. The last Rajput king Karan of Patan was surnamed as *Ghelo*, i.e. 'mad'. Incidentally a novel entitled *Karanghelo* was written two years before *Sasuvahuni Ladai* in 1864.

After the sub-text, let me focus on a question that would fall either beyond or between sub-text and inter-text. I will put it in the category of pre-(?)text, if this term can be used. For all interpretations, signifiers are pretexts and pre-texts for the text i.e. the text that comes in existence after the interpretation. It is a different matter that at times pre-text

is used as a license and overstresses certain deliberately foregrounded questions at the cost of their other important questions waiting to be addressed.

Quite a few distinguished Gujarati critics have invested their resources in responding to the question of the first novel in Gujarati: Is *Sasuvahuni Ladai* the first novel or *Karanghelo*? To me, the fact is the *Sasuvahuni Ladai* was written in 1866 and the problem is how the novel form was grafted in Indian soil, or in Gujarat, and how it grew here in the land that was one of the earliest cradles of narrative and what purpose it served here?

Let me use these questions as pretexts to submit a few of my propositions.

Towards the end of his "Appeal" that the novelist had written to his 'educated' countrymen, he wrote:

Our endeavors to introduce reforms among our people will continue to be lame, and in a good degree, fruitless as long as our wives continue to be ignorant, oppressed, and superstitious. Let us raise their position in society, and (sic) in their tone of morality. Let us increase their knowledge of the world. Let us acquaint them with their duties as wives and mothers and their duties to man and God. (33)

The excerpt shows that Mahipatram wanted to reform the society, particularly the lot of oppressed women and establish harmony to make people aware of these problems and ways to get rid of them. It needed education and good books containing such knowledge, "worth reading" (10)

For Nilkanth the term "worth reading" stood for such books as would be qualitatively worthy and interesting. The quality of content comes from *sunīti*, *vidyā* and *anubhav* along with special talent (*vivekabuddhi*). Since reforms are possible only by the participation of people at a larger scale, for this it is necessary that such worthy books should reach them. Even if these books reach them, they would read them only if they are interesting. He could have written an essay but did not, for prosaic nature often acts a deterrent. Since human beings are instinctively drawn to narration, hence a literary form that can be in narrative and serve as a vehicle of achieving the desired goal was

the need. Nothing served this purpose better than novel, for its intrinsic elasticity offered him scope for narration and fiction pleasing with its imaginative content. His choice was vindicated by Goverdhanram Tripathi who had seriously contemplated writing an essay but abandoned it and chose to use the form of the novel to articulate his thoughts in functional terms in the magnum opus *Sarasvaticandra*. However, the form was not so important for him, as was the content and objectives therein. It is a different matter that once the writer chooses a certain form for his experience or content, the form to good measure conditions the content before getting entwined. Mahipatram was one of the first grafters of the form of novel in Gujarati and also in Indian languages. The tradition of narrative was nothing new for India. The soil was different, and so was the climate. So a different plant grew and bore different fruits afterwards, allowing the subsequent novelists to further experiment with it. Even Mahipatram did not feel psychologically shifted by the literary form that was developed by the colonizers, and manipulated its elasticity for his ends by introducing dialogue form in the narrative, by using inter-textuality in the form of *gīt*, *prārthanāmālā* in different meters, and story within the story of the novel. However, the technical or formal innovation and experimentation was neither his priority, nor his agenda. He stated in the "Introduction":

My purpose is to bring to surface good and bad customs and manner prevalent in different castes, appreciate good ones and condemn bad ones through this imaginative narrative. I humbly recommend it to fiction writers that it is better to follow this suit instead of describing what has not happened in our society and what does not now. We should present such things in the form of narrative as deal with what happens in society and as would touch the core of the hearts of our people and leave an effect on them. It should be full of relish and also interesting so that it becomes more pleasing to the people. By adding ethical rectitude it becomes instructive and hence advantageous. (22)

This was Nilkanth's agenda not just for his *Sasuvahuni Laiai* that he had already written by then, but for his contemporary writers and the subsequent ones, and also to justify, if at all, the changes that he affected into the second edition of the novel. He did suggest tinges of his preference for realistic writings but leaves no prescriptive trace of either form or technique.

The realistic trace is discernible in his insistence on writing whatever happens and in the subtitle of the novel *Vartarupe Khari Chahi: Subodh one Ramu Sahit* ("A True Image in the Form of a Narrative: Easy to Understand and with Fun"). Here each and every word is extremely significant. All creative works are images or representations but Mahipatram qualifies it with 'true' that comes close to just and real, not realistic. Whatever may be the meaning of '*Khari*' — true, just and real — all one or just one, the adjective becomes the source of what instructs, educates or teaches. But the image is in the form of narrative that explains what follows the colon. The narrative makes it easy to understand and relish with fun that emanates from the matter and manner of narration. Further, since the image is not the object in itself, there is scope of imaginative and fictive whose mingling with factual or what is true makes it interesting, pleasing and entertaining. The novelist achieves a delicate balance between pleasing and instructive function of novel in particular and literature in general. Here, the word used by the writer is *subodh* i.e. easy to understand, and not *sabodh* i.e. with instructions or teaching. The point is clear i.e. anything educative or instructive for reforming the society, if not understood by those for whom it is meant, is of no use for it fails in its primary purpose. The subtitle, in a way, contains Mahipatram's definition of novel, of social novel in particular. Moreover, narration in itself is interesting, but dramatic dialogues and songs make it further interesting. This might have persuaded Mahipatram to use long dialogues in the novel. In this admixture of story within the story, songs and dramatic dialogues, one sees glimpses of the traditions of *katha* and *dayara* that the novelist might have been exposed to in the society. Moreover, Mahipatram seems to think that the use of songs, and stories within the story is necessary for the narration of this novel, though at times they disrupt the movement of the plot.

From the viewpoint of his definition of the novel and the objectives that the novelist had set for himself, Nilkanth was much successful in his endeavor. His endeavor was of historical significance, for he did not intervene in the tradition of novel, as he did not avail himself of any. He rather established one. For him, novel as a form was not an end but an instrument for social reform. Those who see novel as reincarnation of epic and seek epical scope or magnitude for unraveling

of complexities of human nature or relationship are privileged to do so. However, the fact not to be missed here is that Mahipatram did it almost a century and a half ago and succeeded in making *Sasuvahuni Ladai* more than the description of a mere quarrel between daughter-in-law and mother-in-law. Though historical context should not be used as a shield to gloss over inherent literary inadequacies of a text or writer, but if shorn of its historical context, the texts of historical relevance are at times subjected to injustice. Through his novel he created space for interaction between the alien form of novel and the native narrative traditions, and even between fictional and other literary techniques for posterity to realize its formal potentialities. As one of the earliest practitioners of the craft and art of novel in Gujarati, Mahipatram Nilkanth earns our attention for 'playing' with the form of novel and thereby moulding the formal space of the English/European form of novel to his native realities.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. The world all over witnessed an unprecedented interest in the condition of woman in the 19th century after the publication of Mary Woolstoncraft's *Vindication of Rights of Woman* in 1792 in the West and after the crusade of Raja Ram Mohun Roy against Sati in India. Almost in all the modern Indian languages women began to explore the possibilities of articulating their experiences in the forms available to them, and even their male counterparts began to take the woman and her concerns more seriously than ever. So, in Bangla, Rasasundari Dasi wrote *Āmār Jīban*, later translated as *My Life*; then, in Hindi there were titles that focused on women as *Rani Ketki ki Kahani*, *Chandrakanta Santati* and *Devrani Jethani ki Kahani* and *Rajmohan's Wife* in English among others.
2. Cf. my paper entitled "Ornament or Blessing: Colonial Paradigm in the Nineteenth Century India" in *Indian Journal of Literary Criticism* (2003) for the discussion of Raja Ram Mohun Ray's comments on the deliberate hesitation prevailing in the then English rulers of India in the enactment of law for remarriage.
3. The term *Brāhmaṇ*, before it came to be associated with one's birth in a caste, in its original sense meant 'udār hṛday' or generous, high-minded or munificent. Derived from the root 'Vṛdh' = increase + 'vrah' it became 'Brahat' and 'Braham' meaning ever increasing or growing day by day. The question then is: How does one know? 'One grows by knowing. Hence knowing was the principal trait of a Brahmin. *The*

Bhavadharmavakopaniṣad mentions a word '*Kṛpaṇ*' opposite to Brahman. '*Kṛpaṇ*' means 'pitiable', narrow minded, and miser. In modern English parlance it comes close to "an educated man". Bhagwan Buddha in *Sutta* treatise has expostulated attributes of a *Brahmin* as against *Kṛpaṇ* as (i) Sound health (*svastha*), (ii) Birth in the family of parents engaged in righteous conduct (*dharma*), (iii) One who is *Bahuśhrut* i.e. who has heard much or well informed, (iv) one who has a mature intellect (*prajñāvān*), and (v) one who is a person of virtuous character (*Śīlavān*). On being asked if one does not have one or two of the above attributes, will the person still be a Brahmin or *śushikṣit*, Bhagwan Buddha replied that the last two are indispensable like two hands for washing, not merely together but cleaning each other. Juxtaposed with these attributes, the Brahmins portrayed by Mahipatram Nilkanth are unbrahminical Brahmins, for their conduct is opposite to the given attributes. Nilkanth, as an insider and a victim and beneficiary as well, was in a fitting position to satirize the decadent Brahminical patriarchy of the period.

4. By locating the action of the novel in the beginning of the 18th century Mahipatram must have thought of not offending his English masters' image as stimulators of social reform. Conversely he suggested that these problems existed in Muslim India and not so much in English rule that was reforming the evils, though in the 'Appeal', the reports that he has cited, have enough pointers to the Englishmen's indifference in ridding Indian society of its evils.
5. Generally it was believed that *Karanghelo* was written in 1868. Later critics tried to prove that it was written in 1864. Hence, *Karanghelo* and not *Śāśuvahunī Ladai* is the first novel in Gujarati. Cf. Yashwant Shukla and Bholabhai Patel.
6. Mahipatram wrote in this regard in the 'Introduction' to the second edition of the novel, "The way I recommend purchase and reading of book to my countrymen, in a similar vein I suggest that they (books) should be worth reading. The people are obliged to support only good books, not all sorts of books. All those who sit to write cannot write good books. Some people naturally have intelligence to write books. But along with this they should have ethical rectitude, learning and experience. Those who do not have these qualities, such people write unworthy books and put good citizens to shame by asking them to purchase them" (20-21)

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ABSTRACT:

AN EXAMPLE OF A CULTURAL ADAPTATION OF *HAMLET*

Shakespeare's plays have not lost their appeal and relevance even today. His vision of life is so universal that it can easily transcend the barriers of time, place and even culture. An illustration of such a phenomenon may be seen in the cultural adaptation of *Hamlet* by the Kannada poet, critic, dramatist and novelist Kuvempu (Dr. K. V. Puttappa, the Jnanapitha Award Winner for his epic *Ātma Rāmāyana Darśanam*) who has tried to respond to Shakespeare in his own creative manner.

It is a matter of common knowledge that translation is an adventurous task of transforming one linguistic code into another, which obviously requires a bilingual competence and creativity. But this process of translation becomes all the more difficult when the translator has to translate not only the linguistic code, but also the cultural code. In fact, cultural transplantation of theme happens to be more difficult and challenging than the normal linguistic translation especially when the source culture and the target culture happen to be radically different from each other, like, for example, the western and the eastern; or the British and the Indian; or the Christian and the Hindu. Thus cultural dissimilarity poses a great challenge to the translator who, when he cannot find exact equivalents in the target cultural codes, has to make minor changes in the plot or structure, characters and texture to convey the essential vision of the source cultural codes in a manner acceptable to readers and spectators of the target culture. Such an adaptation (or *rupantar*) may involve the process of altering the scenic sequence, the number of characters, the units of action and the chronotope etc., to suit the expectations of the audience for whom the work is primarily meant. Nothing that jars on the sensibility of the spectators of the target culture has to be retained in the text by the cultural translator. Such circumstances demand a creative but marginal change in the structure

as well as the texture of a work of art, especially a play that achieves its completion in the presence of a live audience. Such a problem was faced by myself when I tried to Indianize J. M. Synge's *The Playboy of the Western World* and Bertolt Brecht's *The Caucasian Chalk-Circle* and *The Good Woman of Setzuan* in my cultural translation into Kannada.

Kuvempu faced the same difficulty in his cultural translation of *Hamlet* into *Raktākṣī*. We all know that *Hamlet* is one of the great tragedies of Shakespeare giving expression to his tragic vision against the background of British, Elizabethan and Christian culture, in the linguistic code of sixteenth century England. Kuvempu, who is separated from Shakespeare in time by four hundred years and in space by about three thousand miles and in culture to a great extent, has not only accepted the challenge but also has happily succeeded in it to a large extent.

The first thing that strikes our attention is the conspicuous change that Kuvempu has brought in the title of the play. Instead of retaining the proper name of Hamlet for the play, he has named it as *Raktākṣī* which means "The bloody eyed girl", which suggests the preponderance of bloodshed that is typical of a tragedy. In Kuvempu's play, it is Ophelia who is named as Rudrambe who becomes a 'bloody eyed girl'. Thus the play being named after a lady instead of being named after a man holds a mirror to Kuvempu's creative shift of emphasis from the inactive male to the active female which is in tune with the Hindu philosophical belief that woman is a manifestation of *Śakti* or cosmic energy as well as with the modern feminist philosophy which considers woman not only as equal but even superior to man. Kuvempu has given a very appropriate name to the heroine Ophelia by calling her 'Rudrambe' which comes from the Vedic god Rudra and which connotes the terrific or the ferocious element and sentiment.

Kuvempu has exercised his creative imagination in the very selection of the historical story of a Viraśaiva royal family of Karnataka, which can be the nearest equivalent to that of *Hamlet* and which can, therefore, be amply adequate to express the tragic vision of Shakespeare without upsetting the cultural norms of Indians, especially Hindus. His selection of a story of a Viraśaiva royal family of Keladi Kingdom in seventeenth century Karnataka helps him to appropriate it for the expression of Hamletian predicament. The relationship between the

Members of the royal family and between the Kingdom of Keladi and that of Hyderali of Mysore and the usual political intrigues obtaining between them have been intelligently employed by Kuvempu by being invested with the tragic spirit of Shakespeare's play. Once the story of a royal family and its relationship with a neighbouring kingdom is selected, the translator has to adhere to the cultural codes also presupposed by these kingdoms. Any value that is not acceptable to the story structure of the target culture has to be eliminated inevitably. Thus Kuvempu being himself a poetic dramatist in Kannada, has exercised his creative discrimination in eliminating certain scenes and characters of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* in line with the cultural requirements of the story as well as the technical and contingent requirements of the Kannada stage. Thus in the process of trans-cultural transplantation what is lost in one respect is gained in another, qualitatively if not quantitatively.

The chief cause of action of *Hamlet* happens to be the unjust murder of the King of Denmark by his queen, Gertrude, and his younger brother, Claudius, and the usurpation of his throne by the present king, Claudius. The central action of *Hamlet* thus happens to be double dimensional i.e. sexual and political. This core theme of *Hamlet* has been properly captured by Kuvempu, but he has made some minor changes in the perspectives, if not in the relationship between the characters. Hanuvippanayaka happens to be the king who has been unjustly murdered by Captain Nimbayya (equivalent to King Claudius) and Rani Cheluvambe (equivalent to Queen Gertrude). But an important difference between Claudius and Nimbayya is that Claudius has occupied the position of a king and that of a husband of Gertrude. Thus both his kingship and husbandhood have been legitimized although not wholly approved by Hamlet. But in *Raktākṣī*, Nimbayya remains only a Captain of the army and not the legitimate king. Similarly he remains a clandestine lover of Rani Cheluvambe and never married to her publicly. Thus his political and sexual power remain illegitimate and clandestine and therefore, acceptable to the Indian, especially Hindu culture which is a repressive culture as against the exhibitive culture of the West. Had Kuvempu made Nimbayya the King of Keladi and married him to Rani Cheluvambe, the plot would have suffered from the violation of the law of probability in the Hindu context and therefore, unacceptable to the Hindu spectators who are likely to view such action as shameless.

The murder of the King of Denmark has taken place before the beginning of the play, *Hamlet*. A similar situation is retained by Kuvempu in *Raktākṣī* where King Basavappanayaka has already been murdered and appears in the form of a ghost initially seen by a sentinel called Kenchanna who is an equivalent of Bernardo. Kuvempu has retained one sentinel instead of two, i.e., Bernardo and Francesco, in order to reduce the number of characters to the minimum possible ones for achieving the theatrical economy and cohesion of dramatic effect on the Kannada spectators nourished on concise plays of various kinds.

The supernatural appearance of the ghost of Basavappanayaka is noticed by the sentinel Kenchanna who goes on publicizing it among the members of the palace. He tells the news to Honnayya (which means the 'goldenman') who is an equivalent to Horatio. Honnayya is also surprised by the appearance of the ghost of Basavappanayaka. Both of them compare their experiences and confirm the veracity of the same.

The incest motif which is central to Shakespeare's tragedy has been slightly altered by Kuvempu in *Raktākṣī*. Rānī Cheluvambe's illegal and secret relationship with Captain Nimbayya is parallel to Gertrude's with King Claudius. Her name 'Cheluvambe' is significant in that it denotes the meaning 'a pretty lady' and seems to be deliberately chosen by Kuvempu. Her physical beauty has perhaps made her prone to the illegal sexual attraction for Captain Nimbayya who happens to be a cunning and clever person. Prince Hamlet's philosophical and melancholic nature making him oversensitive to his mother's incestuous indulgence has been qualitatively maintained by Kuvempu. Prince Basavayya broods philosophically about the complexity of life and wishes he were never born. Although Kuvempu has invested Prince Basavayya with a philosophical nature, he has been careful enough to give a Hindu, especially Vedantic flavour to his philosophization. For example, Prince Basavayya never wishes to be born again because of his awareness that every birth is followed by the balance of *Karma* like a shadow. At times, Kuvempu has retained the secular, universal and essential element that is ingrained in Hamlet's philosophical speech. Prince Basavayya curses his step mother as a Śani (i.e. planet Saturn) who has started an illegal relationship with Captain Nimbayya before the grass has grown on his father's grave and before the tears of the mourners are dry. He exclaims rhetorically, "O frailty, is not your name woman?" He invokes

Hamlet to strike his mother and her paramour.

On the whole, Hamlet's melancholy, philosophical brooding and waiting is brought out well and beautifully by Kuvempu, although the setting is generally Hindu, especially Vedantic. Prince Basavayya feels that there is some fraud in the death of his father Basavappanayaka. Basavayya, son of Captain Nimbayya (equivalent to Laertes, son of Polonius in Shakespeare's play) tries to console him by reminding him of the Vedantic lesson taught by his guru that birth and death are but part of *māyā* and that man should not worry about them. But Prince Basavayya finds it difficult to accept sorrow as part of *māyā*. He is troubled about the fraud — whether it is in others or in him. He expresses his sorrow homologically by comparing the world to a painted dome, which hides the truth that is white. In his opinion, the world looks like a fool and a wise man appears like a fool in a majority of cases.

In Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, King Claudius revels at midnight. But he is eliminated by Kuvempu in *Raktākṣī* perhaps because of his own puritanical nature or because of his desire to make the play simpler. When Hamlet worries about the death of his father, his suspicion is removed and his vindictive motivation is intensified by the ghost of his father. Kuvempu has wisely retained this central scene in *Raktākṣī*. Prince Basavayya dreams a dream in which he sees his father shedding tears and later he meets the ghost of Basavappanayaka at midnight (not in the palace but outside the city of Bidanur in a nearby forest). The encounter with the ghost is not presented directly but is reported by Prince Basavayya. He tells Minister Linganna that he has seen his father's ghost who appeared to him in the moonlight in a dignified manner, that it, while shedding tears, narrated the event and divulged the secret. He has learnt from the ghost that it was Rānī Cheluvambe and Captain Nimbayya who got King Basavappanayaka killed by mixing poison with medicine and cleverly getting it administered to the ailing king, that Rānī Cheluvambe has been dallying with her lover Captain Nimbayya thereby neglecting the family honour; that the ghost ordered for the burning of the two culprits so that it could have a sense of satisfaction; that Basavayya should save his own life and protect the kingdom both of which are likely to be snatched away by Captain Nimbayya. Thus Prince Basavayya's subjective fear is corroborated by

the objective event of encounter with the ghost. The event shown in direct action on the stage in Shakespeare's play is presented through indirect action in Kuvempu's play.

Hamlet suffering from the emotion of love is common to Shakespeare's play as well as Kuvempu's. In *Raktākṣī*, Rudrambe (equivalent to Ophelia) is a young lady of sixteen who is as delicate as strong and terrible. Kuvempu appropriately describes her as pretty, as a far-off lightning. Unlike in Shakespeare's play where Ophelia is warned to be careful with Hamlet and to cold-shoulder him, Rudrambe in Kuvempu's play is asked by her father, Minister Linganna to entertain Prince Basavayya and ease the burden of his soul. Rudrambe appears to be slightly more mature than Ophelia, as she wants to share her lover's happiness as well as his sorrow. She requests him to tell her the cause of his suffering. Although initially he hesitates to reveal the real reason for his suffering, finally he expresses it frankly. But Rudrambe finds it difficult to believe in the evil intention of Rānī Cheluvambe. On the whole, the relationship between Prince Basavayya and Rudrambe is characterized by a lyrical beauty and sweetness and mutual trust. Kuvempu's depiction of the Prince and Rudrambe appears to be more affirmative than Shakespeare's depiction of Hamlet and Ophelia. In Shakespeare's play, Hamlet's love for Ophelia is tinged with melancholy and Ophelia's response to Hamlet is one of suspicion, distrust and caution. Ophelia does not reciprocate his love properly. Hamlet, therefore, curses her to go to the nunnery. She never understands the intensity of Hamlet's love, which is not equalled by the love of even forty thousand brothers. But Kuvempu's picture is slightly different from Shakespeare's. Rudrambe is never cold and rigid like Ophelia in her relationship with her lover. Rudrambe shows a sense of trust in the value of love. Likewise, Prince Basavayya loves her sincerely but never to the extent of going mad or losing the balance of his mind. Kuvempu has given a clarity of motivation to Prince Basavayya and Rudrambe, whereas Shakespeare has brought in an element of ambiguity and abnormality in his characterization of Hamlet. Kuvempu has eliminated the character of Laertes i.e., brother of Ophelia totally from his play. Instead, he has created a rival for the prince in Sivayya (Somayya's friend) for the love of Rudrambe. Such an emotional rivalry is not to be found in Shakespeare's play.

Once Hamlet learns from his father's ghost the crime of Claudius and Gertrude, he decides to take revenge upon his uncle in power. But before that, he accidentally gets a chance of arranging a stage-play entitled *The Mousetrap* with the help of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern and to catch the conscience of the King. The meta-dramatic device used by Shakespeare happens to be one of the most interesting scenes in *Hamlet*, which enables the oversmart protagonist to watch the awakening of the conscience of King Claudius and Gertrude. The scene has a psychological as well as moral dimension about it. Hamlet becomes a drama-director in order to expose the drama of his uncle and mother. The whole situation with many of its details is conspicuous by its absence in Kuvempu's *Raktākṣī*. Kuvempu's elimination of the whole situation has undoubtedly impoverished the play by avoiding the psycho-moral dimension of the play within the play. The reason for Kuvempu's removal of this situation cannot be accounted for in clear-cut terms, though one can, of course, attribute it partially at least to his taste and temperament if not to the theatrical requirements of the Kannada stage. The liberty that he has taken with Shakespeare's play happens to be too blatant to be excused, especially when we know that he had the creative capacity to retain it and make the best out of it.

In *Hamlet*, King Claudius and Gertrude's conscience is pricked by the spectacle of the play arranged by the Prince. But in *Raktākṣī*, Captain Nimbayya and Rani Cheluvambe are alerted by public opinion, which makes them feel guilty as well as apprehensive about the imminent coronation of Prince Basavayya. They feel that the event of coronation will defeat the very purpose of their illegal sexual relation and grabbing of political power. They, therefore, think of getting Prince Basavayya and Minister Linganna initially imprisoned and subsequently murdered. A good deal of political intrigue is brought in by Kuvempu to develop the theme to its logical end. Captain Nimbayya tries to brainwash Rānī Cheluvambe and make her agree to the fact that the kingdom of Keladi should go to his own son Somayya after the murder of the Prince. Rani Cheluvambe who is deeply under the sexual influence of Captain Nimbayya seems to agree to his suggestion. But the kingdom belongs to the subjects as well. The public opinion, thus, begins to be mobilized by the well wishers of the kingdom like Minister Linganna and others. People are eager to crown Prince Basavayya as the King

of Keladi. Thus the two antagonistic groups begin to work against each other through espionage and counter-espionage, intrigue and conspiracy so common in the political life of any kingdom. Kuvempu shifts the emphasis from the private conscience of the Prince to the public conscience of the minister, courtiers and other administrators who seek to restore the political and moral order in the kingdom.

Timmajetti, for example, who had poisoned King Basavappanayaka has been now appointed to murder Prince Basavayya also. But even such a hired murderer feels the pricks of conscience and hesitates to carry out the order. He feels totally helpless as he can neither obey nor dare disobey the secret orders of Captain Nimbayya. Since Kuvempu has eliminated the character of Laertes from *Raktākṣi*, he has made a few suitable changes in the plot according to his own creative imagination. He has also avoided the scene where Polonius eavesdrops on Hamlet's conversation with his mother and where he accidentally kills Polonius hiding behind the arras. Kuvempu suddenly jumps to the situation where Prince Basavayya and Minister Linganna are led to the prison. The imprisonment of two such noble personalities upsets the moral conscience of other courtiers and people who are about to rebel against it, but Captain Nimbayya has worked out a systematic conspiratorial plan of getting the persons out of the prison and have them murdered conveniently in the nearby woods. But the operation of moral order is shown through the external political force of Hyderali of Mysore and his army. Counter-spying overtakes spying. Ramaraya, a spy of Hyderali, who has assumed the guise of a sanyāsī learns the secret of murder-order from Timmajetti, and tries to avoid it systematically. He gives sleep-inducing medicine to Sanganna, the guard of the prison and helps Sivayya and Honnayya to take out Prince Basavayya and Minister Linganna from the prison. While the two persons i.e. Sivayya and Honnayya are taking out the two prisoners separately, the sanyāsī gives a letter to Prince Basavayya and asks him to hand it over secretly to Hyderali of Mysore camping at Sivamogge.

One of the innovations brought into the plot by Kuvempu is that he creates in Sivayya, a rival for Prince Basavayya for the love of Rudrambe. Sivayya knows that he cannot have the love of Rudrambe as long as Prince Basavayya stays alive. He, therefore, tries to cheat the Prince on the way to Sivamogge. He tries to prejudice him against

though the Prince is not easily convinced by him. Finally, Sivayya convinces the Prince by drawing his attention to the beauty of Nature and him. When the Prince is looking down the valley, Sivayya pushes him down and is happy to imagine that the Prince is dead. Prince Basavayya screams and moans piteously and curses the treachery of Sivayya who rides away hurriedly from there.

A little later, when Honnayya brings Minister Linganna to the same place, they hear the moaning of the Prince in the valley and learn from him the treachery of Sivayya. Before dying, Prince Basavayya hands over the letter to Minister Linganna and asks him to reach it to Hyderali who is staying at Sivamogge and to avenge the death of King Basavappanayaka.

Sivayya has already met Hyderali at Sivamogge and gives him a false impression that he is Prince Basavayya himself. But Minister Linganna comes there at the right time and exposes the double-dealing and pretension of Sivayya. Hyderali, convinced by the honesty of Minister Linganna and exasperated by the hypocrisy of Sivayya, understands the chaos that is prevalent at the Kingdom of Keladi. He orders Sivayya to be arrested and promises to help Minister Linganna defeat Captain Nimbayya and his paramour Rani Cheluvambe. This part of the play is strikingly different from that of *Hamlet* and holds a mirror to Kuvempu's creativity. The agent of moral order or justice comes from outside the Kingdom of Keladi. While Kuvempu has retained the law of vengeance which is a kind of wild justice and the chief motif in *Hamlet*, but has adapted it to suit the cultural context of Karnataka. He has creatively shifted the operation of the law of justice from the palace to the outside force represented by Hyderali of Mysore. This alteration in the plot contributes a great deal to the capturing of the attention of the Kannada audience who know the political relationship between the Kingdom of Keladi and that of Hyderali, father of Tippu Sultan of Mysore.

Captain Nimbayya and Rani Cheluvambe are afraid that the situation has gone out of their control. When they learn that Minister Linganna has escaped from the Kingdom of Keladi and sought the help of Hyderali and that there is a rebellion of the native citizens also, they grow desperate and wish to win the war through foul means i.e. by squandering money on soldiers. The lover and the beloved grow more and more dependent upon each other and decide to live or die together.

The whole situation connected with the young lady Rudrambe is a new one created by Kuvempu and not to be found in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. Kuvempu, for example, has avoided the situation of the duel between Hamlet and Laertes and the Queen drinking the poison accidentally and Hamlet and Laertes dying by mutual wounding. In Kuvempu's play, Prince Basavayya has already died, but the law of vindictive justice has come into operation.

In *Raktākṣī*, Kuvempu has brought in his own changes. In order to please Captain Nimbayya, Honnayya has taken upon himself the crime of murdering the Prince although the latter is actually murdered by Sivayya. Honnayya is a well wisher of the Prince secretly. He, therefore, arranges a decent burial for the dead Prince.

But Honnayya's fake confession of being the murderer of the Prince has exasperated Rudrambe, beloved of the Prince. The course of action takes an unexpected direction. It is here that Kuvempu's creative innovation and cultural adaptation can be felt very strikingly. He has made Rudrambe not a very innocent girl like Ophelia, but a figure bubbling with the elemental vitality. When Rudrambe learns the false news that Honnaya has killed her lover-prince, she grows ferocious and wants to kill Honnayya. In the outer lane of Bidanur, she comes clad in old rags and in a fierce mood of anger and despair and behaves in a mad fashion in the moonlight. She addresses the stars a merciless and the shine of the moon as sepulchral and wants to kill the moon. She feels a blankness in her and requests the mountains and forests; the sky and the ocean the sun and the moon and the stars, the cosmos, time and space to fill in her blankness. She is eager to kill Honnayya, the murderer of her lover. She claims to be a "bloody-eyed girl" i.e., *Raktākṣī*. Just a little while after Honnayya has rendered a decent burial to Prince Basavayya, the rag-covered Rudrambe rushes to the spot where she stabs Honnayya indiscriminately. Honnayya feels sorry that he could not reveal the truth to Rudrambe earlier. He cannot identify Rudrambe but after knowing her identity, he tells her that it was Sivayya who murdered the Prince but that he took the blame on himself just to give the dead Prince a decent burial. Now that Rudrambe realizes the truth, she falls on Honnayya and repents of her indiscriminate and incorrigible action. Before dying, Honnayya reminds her to wreak vengeance upon Sivayya according to the last wish of Prince Basavayya. Honnayya dies

ally as he how has the satisfaction of revealing the truth of events. Rudrambe True to her name, Rudrambe assumes a terrific mood. Invokes the spirit of Lord Śiva and invites him to suck her poisonous. she requests the three-eyed Lord (Śiva) to burn her as he burnt. she invokes Lord Bhairava to inspire her and to spark off an. thunder and to enable her to fulfil her lover's wish. She also. to the Lord not to shake her faith in him. After crying like this, Rudrambe remembers something and begins to dig up the mud of the. with a spade lying about there. Kuvempu has thus invested the. of Rudrambe with a greater liveliness and energy than. Shakespeare's Ophelia who appears to be relatively cold, passive and. with a suicidal tendency. Rudrambe becomes a striking medium. of the operation of the law of justice or vengeance initially broached. by the phost of King Basavappanayaka.

Whereas Rudrambe is the internal agent of vengeance, Hyderali of Mysore with his large army happens to be the external agent of vengeance. The two agencies combine to punish the culprits and restore the law and order in the Kingdom. For example, Captain Nimbayya and Rani Cheluvambe are unhappy to know that their messengers are captured by Hyderali of Mysore. Captain Nimbayya orders Rudrayya to keep the army ready and burn the palace as soon as the enemies attack it. He wants to take his paramour Cheluvambe away from the city through a secret passage. But all their expectations are nullified. The messengers come and report that the army of Hyderali has attacked the city of Bidanur. Rani Cheluvambe is deeply worried. Captain Nimbayya tries to cheer her up by promising to take her to a safe place and return to the battlefield. Both of them change their dress and try to escape in disguise, but to their surprise, they discover that the door has been locked from outside. The external agency and the internal agency of vengeance are combined at this juncture. They see Rudrambe through the peephole. They order and even request her to open the door but she refuses to do so and accuses them of having had Prince Beavayya murdered. The two lovers remain totally helpless. Rani Cheluvambe repents her sin and crime and invokes the spirit of her late son Basavayya and sinks to the floor. But Captain Nimbayya hardens himself to die along with his beloved in the overwhelming flames. In Hyderali's camp at Sivamogge, Hyderali thanks Ramaraya who was in

the guise of a sanyāsī. Hyderali is happy to have punished the evil but unhappy not to have protected the good people. He is unhappy about the death of Prince Basavayya. Minister Linganna is worried about the whereabouts of his daughter Rudrambe. Muhammadali, Captain of Hyderali's army wants to send his soldiers to search for her. Hyderali suggests that Minister Linganna should punish the culprits, but the latter refuses to punish them in spite of his despair. He wants everybody to be happy. His only wish is to see his daughter once. He wants to bless everyone and never tries to curse anyone. This line of action is, obviously, in line with the Hindu philosophy of life, which is highlighted by Kuvempu. By that time a soldier comes and reports that a mad girl rushed into the prison and murdered Sivayya and stabbed herself. Minister Linganna is heart-broken to learn this tragic news. The dead body of Sivayya is lying in a pool of blood. Rudrambe is dying slowly. Minister Linganna comes there and falls on his dying daughter in a very sorrowful manner. Hyderali and Muhammadali also come there and witness the tragic scene helplessly. Thus the play *Raktākṣī* ends with a lot of bloodshed and death thereby suggesting a sense of tragic waste and affirming the moral order of the universe.

Raktākṣī, thus holds a mirror to Kuvempu's creative ability to transplant Shakespeare's tragic vision from the British and Christian cultural setting to the Indian and Hindu cultural setting. Although he has taken liberty with the original play *Hamlet* by eliminating certain characters and situations, he has retained the basic motifs like the illegal sexual relation, the supernatural element (of the ghost of King Basavappanayaka and its instruction to the Prince), the revenge motif, the court intrigue, the reflective tone about death and ephemerality of life and the sense of tragic waste by adapting them to the Kannada cultural pattern thereby making it acceptable to the Kannada spectators. One of the striking changes that Kuvempu has made in the characterization of Hamlet is that he has made Prince Basavayya relatively more firm and clear in his attitude to life than Hamlet. Hamlet's interminable oscillation or dilemma has been minimized by Kuvempu in the creation of Prince Basavayya's character. Consequently we see in the character of Prince Basavayya less psychologization and morbidity and relatively more action than in Hamlet. But the reduction of Hamletian dilemma and psychologization and enlargement of action cannot be quantified

Exactly though it can be felt by any sensitive reader of *Raktākṣī*.

A comparative overview of Shakespeare's imagery in *Hamlet* and Kuvempu's in *Raktākṣī* shows a world of difference between the two. Kuvempu's translation of the British and Christian cultural codes into Indian and Hindu cultural codes may be seen in the texture expressed in the native imagery employed by the various characters in the play. Whereas the images of disease and corruption are predominant in *Hamlet* and contribute to the morbid atmosphere of the play, *Raktākṣī* is studded with a variety of typically Hindu images drawn from Hindu religion, myths, superstition, philosophy, yoga and Nature. Although the images of disease and corruption are not very dominant in *Raktākṣī*, there are many Hindu images, which qualitatively reveal the idea of corruption. The images of snake, snake-hole, kiss of a snake, the *Kālakūta* poison of Lord Śiva, the graveyard of sky, funeral pyre, dark night, *Śūnya* (Void), hell, planet Śani's (Saturn's) adverse effect, *Karma* and Yama's servants create an atmosphere of corruption, disorder, unhappiness, tragic death and futility. The universal images like labyrinth, net, prison, scissors are also used by Kuvempu at appropriate places but these images are combined with those drawn from Nature and cosmos also. Kuvempu who happens to be an excellent lyrical poet in Kannada and who is deeply steeped in Kannada classical poetry, has tried to bring in the images of Nature and cosmos at all the opportunities in *Raktākṣī*. The images of the sun, the moon, the moonlight, thunder, lightning, rainbow, pole star, spring, autumn, garden, river, crocodile, tree, lotus etc., are employed by many characters in *Raktākṣī*, especially by Prince Basavayya. These images provide a qualitative balance to the ones connoting death and poison and serve to tone down the melancholic atmosphere of the play.

Linguistically, Kuvempu provides a parallel to *Hamlet* by mixing prose and verse in *Raktākṣī*. Being a lyric poet as well as an epic poet, Kuvempu is known for his poetic prose. In *Raktākṣī*, he has employed prose for the depiction of normal situations, but poetry for the expression of intense moments of experience. For example, Prince Basavayya's philosophical reflection about death and ephemerality of life, the frailty of woman, his poetic description of Nature, Honnayya's philosophization about the illusionary nature of *māyā* etc., and even Captain Nimbayya's amorous dialogues with Rani Cheluvambe are fine examples of poetic passages known for their beautiful metaphors and mellifluity.

Raktākṣī is, thus, an example of how Shakespeare can be presented to twentieth century Kannada readers and spectators and how the barriers of time, place and culture can be overcome by the creative genius of writers like Kuvempu. The extraordinary popularity of *Raktākṣī* in Karnataka is proved beyond doubt by the very fact that it has run into ten reprints by now, although it was originally published in 1932. It is a fine example of how one great poet of one country receives the vision of life of another great poet of another country and transforms it in the alchemy of his imagination.

* I have used the following editions for the preparation of this article:

1. Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, ed. Edward Hubler, (New York: Signet Classics, Twelfth Reprint, 1963).
2. Kuvempu, *Raktākṣī*, (Mysore: Udayaravi Prakasana, Tenth Reprint, 1993).

GÉRARD DE NERVAL AND INDIA

I must clarify the title. What do I mean? How do I link the name of a poet and the name of a country? The answer is that in what follows I shall try to ascertain the reaction of the French poet Gérard de Nerval vis-à-vis the Indian civilisation in general, the literature being a part of the civilization. In this effort, I shall begin with the biography of Gérard de Nerval. In the next part I shall deal with the development of Indian Studies in France along with the growth of its popularity in French society and after that I shall try to explain Gérard de Nerval's reactions towards Indian civilization. Gérard de Nerval as a poet lives in a strange twilight zone of notoriety. He is known to the student of world poetry as an important poet yet very few study him carefully. This is true even of his native country. If one examines an anthology of French poetry one is sure to find at least one or two poems by Nerval included in it, yet he is not studied seriously in France. This could be because while his prose writings which run into thousands of pages are poetry in their essence, his poems of which there are only fifty-six, adhere to the strict form of the genre.

Son of an army doctor Etienne Labrunie and Marie-Antoinette Marguerite Laurent, Gérard Labrunie, famous in his pen name as Gérard de Nerval, was born in 1808 in Paris. When he was two years old, he lost his mother who, at the time, was in Germany with his father. She was buried in Germany. Since then Gérard lived with his great uncle Antoine Boucher at Montfontaine in Valois. In 1815 Doctor Labrunie took early retirement from the army and came to live in Paris. In 1820 when great uncle Antoine died the young Gerard came to Paris to live with his father. He joined Lycée Charlemagne where the young Théophile Gautier was his classmate. This was a very fruitful meeting between the two future poets and they remained good friends till the end. In 1828, Nerval published the translation of the first part of Goethe's

Faust and overnight he became a part of the literary circle of Paris. He was presented to the already famous Victor Hugo. In the same year he met Petrus Borel and started frequenting him. In fact, it was Nerval who in his turn presented Théophile Gautier to Victor Hugo and Petrus Borel. In 1830 we find Gérard de Nerval along with Théophile Gautier as 'soldiers' in the battle of *Hernani* in the theater hall of La Comédie Française. The meeting with Petrus Borel and the participation in the famous 'Battle' were the turning points in Nerval's life. Before this, between 1828 and 1830 he had been successively an apprentice with a printing press and a Notary Public. After the battle of *Hernani* we find him as a member of the artistic movement under the leadership of Petrus Borel and later under his best friend Théophile Gautier. He attained manhood as an important member of Jeune France movement with Théophile Gautier and other young romantic writers under the leadership of Borel. On the whole, the Jeune France believed in the values of the older group of romantic writers like Victor Hugo and Lamartine. However they differed in their idea of an artist and his mission. According to the older group an artist was a person whose creative activities had to lead to the progress and betterment of society. For Jeune France the obligation of the artist was only to create beauty in any field of art, through any medium, be it painting, sculpture, architecture or the written word. In other words, they believed in art for art's sake. They also believed that the artist belonged to a society quite apart from the traditional human society: thus, an artist would sleep during the day and live during the night. Nerval being an active member of the group was imprisoned for two nights only for disturbing peace at night. But before this incident, in 1830, he had published his own selection of poems of Ronsard and a collection of his translation of German poetry. Between 1831 and 1834, Gérard de Nerval studied medicine, only to be forced to give it up to become a professional writer. In 1831 he wrote two dramas: *Le Prince des Sots* and *Lara* which were both enacted at Odéon which was then the government theatre hall for avant garde theatre of the time. From 1833 Nerval started to travel. This continued till he committed suicide in 1855 on 25th January. 1833 onwards, whenever he could lay his hands on some money, Nerval travelled out of Paris often returning after a long spell without a farthing, covering long distances on foot. He was devoid completely of any practical sense.

father he did not care to possess any. During one such trip to Brittany initially, he met Jenny Colone, an actress of no great talent or beauty. But Nerval fell in love with her and decided to make her famous. In 1814 when he got a legacy of 30,000 francs on the death of his grandfather, he launched a theatre journal to publicize the talents of Jenny Colone. Although he did not succeed in turning Jenny Colone into a celebrity actress, he managed to create a very important and good theatre journal. However, it lasted two years only due to his complete lack of financial or business acumen. Also, in the process he lost his inheritance to the last farthing and was sent to jail for his debts. His friends, mainly Gautier, bailed him out. Jenny Colone, having received such proof of Nerval's practical sense, decided to tie the knot to a violinist of no great talent and settled down to peaceful domesticity. She, however, preserved the letters Nerval had written to her, in this way paying her homage to him. Nerval nevertheless suffered. In 1836, after the liquidation of the theater journal *Le Monde Dramatique* and his subsequent trip to the prison, Gautier got him a job as a columnist in a newspaper, and another friend, Karr, took him on as his assistant to manage his newspaper, *Figaro*.

Let us now take a break from the chronology of Nerval's life and consider the journal launched by him in 1835 called *Le Monde Dramatique*. In launching such a journal his purpose had been to publicize Jenny Colone. But there had been another purpose, a far more important one, which perhaps attracted his literary colleagues: to propagate and popularize the romantic drama. Let us keep in mind that it was only in February 1830 that the Romantics had won their battle over the Classicists at *Hernani*. The Classicists had continued their attack on the romantic drama in newspapers and literary journals. The Romantics did not have a mouthpiece for themselves. That is why young Romantics like Gautier and others grouped around Nerval's journal. They had all been soldiers in the great battle at *Hernani*. Interestingly, in the second number of *Le Monde Dramatique* we find an adaptation of two scenes from the Sanskrit drama *Mṛcchakatikam* by Nerval himself. In the title it was mentioned that it was the translation of the Sanskrit drama by Śūdraka, but in fact, it was a retouched version of a French translation from an English version by an eminent indologist of the time, Langlois, in 1828.

To get back to Nerval's life, he continued with his Bohemian lifestyle even after coming out of prison. The strange thing is that Nerval never wanted to lead such a life. It was due to his complete lack of practical sense that he could not help but lead such a life. He would leave Paris as soon as he completed an assignment and got some money without caring whether he would have a dwelling place on his return or not. So whenever he returned penniless to Paris he would try to secure another assignment, and with the advance paid to him, pay for lodging in order to complete the assignment. With the rest of the money he would either go off on another trip or buying spree. Once, when he was in possession of a certain amount, he bought a beautiful bed. But as he was living in a cheap hotel at the time he could not take delivery of it. When eventually, after a long time, he managed to find some rooms, he did not have the money to buy a mattress for the bed. He slept on the floor next to the bed on a small mattress. Of course he lost the bed in paying for his debts. Could anyone take this man seriously? Nerval may have been a strange person but he certainly was not a strange writer. In fact, what I feel is that he was much too ahead of his time and together with his eccentric way of life, perhaps people did not take him seriously as a writer. Nor has his influence on future French writers been properly considered and studied. Baudelaire, having lost his memory would sign himself as Nerval; Proust considered him to be his forerunner in prose; the Surrealists considered him their predecessor together with Rimbaud.

Nerval was an enthusiastic reader. He read voraciously everywhere: in public libraries when he did not have a fixed place to live; in Gautier's place; in newspaper offices whenever he had an assignment; and wherever he could lay his hands on a book. Apart from reading poetry and literature, he was a keen student of ancient Greek and Latin literature and civilization along with esoteric religion and philosophy. His interest in ancient civilization brought him into contact with Indian civilization which was very much in fashion those days.

Let us now consider the development of Indian studies in France at the time and its subsequent effect on contemporary French society. The first Chair of Sanskrit in Europe was established in La Collège de France in 1814, about twenty years before the establishment of the Boden Chair of Sanskrit at Oxford. Since then, throughout the nineteenth century,

l'College de France produced a galaxy of indologists. Without going into details about them, let us consider the effect of their work on contemporary French society. In this connection, let us quickly go through the encyclopaedias, journals, newspapers as well as the names of a few individuals in Paris who were mentioned in the

Encyclopaedias in France were in abundance in the nineteenth century. The elite consulted them regularly in order to keep abreast of new learnings in different fields of knowledge. Therefore these encyclopaedias played an important role in disseminating information about new discoveries and distant lands like India. An example of such typical encyclopaedia was the *Dictionnaire de la Conversation*, the very title clearly states its purpose. It was a kind of guide to educated conversation. The subtitle further enlightens: *A l'usage des Dames et des Jeunes Personnes*. Raymond Schwab, in his *La Renaissance Orientale* mentions the date of its publication as 1813, but the year of the edition kept in the Bibliotheque Nationale is 1841, which is the tenth edition. This shows how popular the book had been. In this book we find articles on Brahma, Buddha, Siva along with important cities like Delhi, Calcutta, Bombay. The information are more or less accurate, particularly on the cities Delhi, Calcutta and Bombay. The inaccuracies and vagueness occur in the articles dealing with the political history of India which is referred to as Hindoostan. In these articles Muslims as well as the great Mughals are referred to as the Arabs. The articles on Sankhya and the Vedas abound in inaccuracies.

Let us now consider another dictionary of a similar kind: *L'Encyclopédie des Gens du Monde*. It was published between 1834 and 1844, it is in twenty-four volumes. The notice indicates its intention: *L'Encyclopédie des Gens du Monde se placera donc au milieu des deux genres indique : ni élémentaire, ni savant.*¹ But, in fact, this encyclopaedia is much more serious than the other. Here we get the names of the contributors of the articles which include the great historian Michelet as well as the well known orientalist Pauthier along with Baron d'Eckstein who, according to Raymond Schwab, the author of *La Renaissance Orientale*, almost single handedly popularized the study of Indology in the salons. Evidently, this Encyclopaedia was much more of a serious kind than it claimed to be. Most of the articles on India

are of a high quality. For example, the article on Sanskrit says: *C'est en effet reconnu que la race puissante des indiens, descendues des vallées des Hymalayas est la source commune des tribus persans...*². Then he discourses at length on how the letters of the Sanskrit alphabet are arranged and refers to examples from all the Indo-European languages to establish their relationship with Sanskrit.

There were many more such encyclopaedias published during the nineteenth century. But the two examples cited is enough for the present work to illustrate the fact that when Nerval was writing and publishing his journal *Le Monde Dramatique*, the educated society of Paris was quite up to date in their knowledge of India and Indian civilization. It is small wonder therefore that Nerval with his penchant for ancient civilization and esoteric religion should be also interested in India and her civilization.

His interest in India was further aroused by the presence of certain individuals in the capital at the time. In *Le Journal des Débats* of 11th June 1845 we find the new article on the visit of Prince Dwarkanath Tagore to Paris. Covering almost a column in the newspaper we are informed that this was a second visit and that during the first he had been presented to the King with whom he had spent almost three hours. In Paris he was very well received with people queueing up outside his hotel to get a glimpse of him. He was entertained by the elite society. He contributed a hundred francs for the erection of statues of Montaigne and Montesquieu in Bordeaux. He frequented the Opera in Paris and was presented to the actresses who were quite taken up by him. In this connection a reporter wrote: *Les dames des chœurs et du ballet ont parues vivement impresionnées par l'ample et magnifique Cachemire jeté sur ses epaules, et par les ébluissantes pierreries dont ses doigts sont ornés.*³

Around 1838 a troupe of Indian dancers visited Paris and gave public performance at Le Théâtre Ambiguë Comique for some time. Nerval was a spectator at one of the shows and was so impressed by it that after twelve years, in 1850, he wrote about it in the paper *La Presse* of 30th June in an article entitled *Causerie-Les Hindous-La porte Saint-Martin, L'Ambiguë—L'Odéon—Le Vaudeville—L'Opéra*. His enthusiasm about India is illustrated in the following extract, which I quote:

Quelle ville que Paris! ...c'est l'ancienne Rome, - avec ses patriciens, ses clients et ses affranchis. On voit même circuler les Scythiens et les Sarmates, non pas couverts d'or, mais répandant l'or, - les Byzantins et les Egyptiens, figures graves et bienveillantes, comme nous avons étudié leurs aïeux-les Indiens, enfin, ou si l'on veut, les Indous, qui recherchent dans nos théâtre d'opéras et de ballets les vieux souvenirs poétiques et littéraires de l'époque où les Anglais leur étaient inconnus.

Vous les avez vu, avec leurs châles sur l'épaules leurs habits étincelants d'or et leurs turbans chargés de pierreries, vous avez compté les sequins qu'ils répandaient, trop lourds pour être appliqué, selon l'usage orientals, au front humide des danseuses, mais d'un assez bon pour avoir laissé de soixante à cent francs dans les mains de chaque artiste du ballet (Ne réfère-t-il pas au passage de Dwarkanath Tagore à Paris en 1845?)

Pourquoi s'étonner de ce goût spécial pour la danse? Les Indiens comprennent les jambes de nos danseuses, *comme nous avons compris celles d'Amani, la Bayadère qui dansait à Paris il y a dix ans*, et cela les a frappés bien que notre musique, si éloignée du système harmonique orientale qu'elle doit former pour eux une longue suite de dissonances. Quant à nos pièces de théâtre, il faut avouer qu'elles n'offrent rien de bien récréatif à des habitants de l'Himalaya, qui possèdent pour leur théâtre un répertoire agé de quatre mille ans, contenant des milliers de drames et de comédies, et même des tragédies très anciennes—*genre de littérature ennuyeuse, dont l'Inde n'a été purgée qu'après de longues luttes entre les classiques et les romantiques d'Oudjayani*, la vieille capitale, - luttes dans lesquelles ont même intervenus des dieux—comme dans les combats de l'Iliades.

La tragédie, chassée des hautsplateaux de l'Asie, est venue infester l'Europe, - six cents ans environ avant l'ère chrétienne, et si l'ambassadeur du Népal se rendait ce soir à l'Odéon, il risquait fort d'y voir représenter Hamlet, non de Schakespeare, mais de Ducis, et d'écouter la traduction de cette maxime consolante. Mais un vertueux père est un bien précieux.⁴

This could be considered his post scriptum to the adaptation of the Sanskrit drama *Mṛcchakatikam* by Sudraka in collaboration with Joseph Meri, staged in Odéon on 13 May 1850 with the title

Chariot d'Enfant. It also reveals his real reason for his enthusiasm for Indian theatre. We must not forget that till Sanskrit dramas like *Abhijñān Sakuntalam* and *Mṛcchakaṭikam* were known in France there were no examples from the ancient theatre that could be cited as models for the romantic drama. Romantics like Nerval and others therefore hailed the Sanskrit drama as an opposition to the classical Greek drama hitherto accepted as the model for the French classical drama.

It must be noted here that the nineteenth century seriously believed that the birth of civilization had taken place in India thanks to the discovery and study of Sanskrit by scholars. Nerval's knowledge of India is also revealed in his poetry. In *Vers Dorés*, *Erythres*, and *Fantasie* we find a clear reference to Indian civilization. This is how Gerard de Nerval responded to the Indian civilization.

TRANSLATIONS

L'Encyclopédie des Gens du Monde should be put between two classes of readers: neither elementary nor savant.

It is, in fact, accepted that the powerful race of indies, who came down from the valleys of the Himalayas is the common source of persian tribes. The artists of the choir and of the ballet appeared to be very much impressed by the large and magnificent Kashmir (shawl) on his shoulders and the jeweled rings which adorned his fingers.

Paris, what a city! ... it is ancient Rome, — with its patricians, clients and intellectuals. Even Britons and Samaritans can be seen there, not covered with gold but throwing gold about, — the Byzantians and Egyptians, with serious and kind expressions, as we have seen their relatives — the Indians, or the so called, Hindous, who in our theaters and ballets look for the ancient poetic souvenirs and the literature of the period when the Englishmen were unknown to them.

You have seen them, with shawls on the shoulders, their dresses shining with gold and their turbans fitted with jewels, you have counted the gold coins which they distributed around, too heavy to stick, as the oriental custom, on the humid forehead of the dancers, but they are quite generous to give sixty to hundred francs in the hands of every artists of the ballet. (Is he not referring to the visit of Dwarkanath Tagore to Paris in 1845?)

What is there to be astonished by this special liking for dance? The ~~Indians~~ understand the legs of our dancers, as we understood those of ~~Amant~~, the Bayadère (devadasi) who danced in Paris about ten years ago, ~~and~~ they were quite taken aback by our music, so different from the ~~harmonious~~ oriental musical structure, it must have appeared to them as a long series of dissonance. Whereas our dramas, we must admit that ~~it does~~ not offer any recreation to the inhabitants of the Himalayas, who ~~possess~~ a repertory of four thousand years for their theatre, containing thousands of dramas and comedies even very ancient tragedies — *a boring genre of literature, of which India was purged only after a long struggle between the classicists and the romantics* of Oujjine, the ancient capital the battle where even gods intervined — as in the combats of the *Iliad*.

The tragedy, driven away from the high plateau of the Asia, has come to infect Europe, — about six hundred years before Christian era, and if the ambassador of Nepal would have been present this evening in Odeon, he would have risked to see Hamlet not of Shakespeare, but of Ducis, and would have heard the translation of the consoling maxim : But a virtuous father is a precious legacy.

CONTINUITY OF AN ART TRADITION: HARMONY, DISSONANCE & TRANSCENDENCE AND TAGORE'S NOTION OF ART

It is generally believed that Art outflows from the vision of harmony in the multiple diversity of the cosmic scene. The general theme of this conference is to understand this notion of harmony in art with reference to Tagore's aesthetic perception. The principle of harmony in Tagore's study of art or aesthetics is expressed through the ideas of unity, proportion, rhythm and the sense of oneness with the Supreme Reality¹ and consequently the term harmony is used in the paper to denote all these multifarious meanings. In fact, all these ideas of unity, proportion, rhythm, sense of one with the Universal Truth reveal that the principle of harmony is to be understood not only with reference to theme which is the essence of art and literature and artistic and literary appreciation but also the form which seeks to make the content yield its meaning, *artha* but in art experience, however, as much as with the artist himself, content and form are practically inseparable; creative idea and imagination involve the two in one common co-functioning process² and therefore any discussion about the principle of harmony in art is possible only by looking at the thematic content and its form as one single integrated unit.

As the human beings are bound to the linear tension of history, the life of actuality remains the basis of creative act but the desire remains to transcend to a 'beyond' and therefore Indian art has a double time order – one, that is connected with material reality or historical time and therefore has a linear tension, the other, that is connected with the sacred timeless and so has a cyclic rhythm. Hence the statement by Visnu Dharmottaram³ that objects should be represented in such a manner as to have some reference to what is seen in nature and the chief aim is to bring about verisimilitude and also the insistence of the *ulparatha*⁴ on resemblance that looks like a reflex in a mirror are not

to be understood as affirmation of imitation in art but as both actual and the transcendental because the world of art does not deny the real world and at the same time it involves the transcendental. Indian art, therefore, believes in looking at life in its totality— the sensuous and the transcendental, harmony and dissonance, empathy and detachment.

In the hymns of *Rgveda* the term *yajña* is used for the creative act which consists of three aspects, i.e., *Devapūjā* (देवपूजा, regard for the divine i.e. luminosity, knowledge or vision or scenic cognition); secondly, *Samgatikarāṇa* (संगतिकरण i.e. coordination and synthesis or harmony) and third is *Dāna* (दान i.e. gifts and presents) which in its ultimate sense is submerging of the individual self into the Universal Self. In the second and third mantra of the fifty eight *sukta* of the forth *maṇḍala* of the *Rgveda* it is stated that the image of *yajña* suggests an internal synchronization and coordination or harmony from which comes out the four-horned luminous *catuṣhrīṇigovamid gaura vṛṣabho* (चतुःश्रृङ्गोवमीद् गौर वृषभो⁵) bull symbolising the 'great word' that has the four vedas as its four horns. In other words coordination or harmony is responsible for the gushing flow of the artistic creativity from the ocean of the heart *hṛdayāt samudrat* (हृदयात् समुद्रात्). The use of terms like *sāyujya*, *sarūpata* and *salokata* (सायुज्य, सरूपता और सलोकता) in the Upanishads indicate the importance of harmony in the creative manifestation.

Indian epistemological reflections concentrate on the idea of the unity of all things because we are inclined to emphasize throughout the ages the one Universal Being with which all individuals and particulars are identified. In fact all philosophical systems are an expression of the human search for the underlying principle of unity that sustains our understanding of the self, the universe and the Supreme Reality. It is natural, therefore, that the Indian epistemology sets as its highest goal the unification and assimilation of the individual self with the Universal Self. In the *Chāndyogya Upanishad*⁶ Uddalaka teaches that as the bees make honey by collecting the juices have no discrimination, so that they might say, I am the juice of this tree or that, in the same manner, all these creatures; when they have become merged in the Universal Self, know not that they are merged in the True.

The monistic view of the Upanishads was further developed by the Vedantic philosophers headed by Śaṅkara. So great is the influence of Śaṅkara that majority of the Indian philosophers follow the path of Vedānta. Even the schools of Indian pluralism does not reject monism. Vallabhacharya accepts the pluralistic monism. He says that the duality that we perceive in the world does not contradict monism; for the apparent forms and characters which are mutually different cannot contradict their metaphysical character of identity with the Universal Self. So Brahman from one point of view may be regarded as iconic and from another point of view as non-iconic⁷. This double experience is the most important ontological cogitation of Indian mind. This is the Indian concept of *dvandvātmakam jagat* (द्वन्द्वात्मकम् जगत्) where all creativity, all movement all cosmic existence are supposed to have a double nature but at the same time pain and pleasure, reason and non-reason, existence and essence stay together complementing each other in fulfilling the circle of life. As a natural result of such a way of thinking, there appears in India the idea of the oneness of opposite pairs, of good and evil, and of beauty and ugliness. In the Upanishads, too, it is repeated that what appears good or bad to our human eyes is not so in the absolute sense and that the difference between the two is only a matter of comparison. If you want to draw a white line, you need a black background. Therefore, he who says white is the opposite of black, is mistaken. We have to make use of black in order to bring out the white in all its distinction. Man or woman, fire or water, sky or earth are all around us, their existence stands supported as pairs of opposites. Sankhya says that *puruṣa* and *prakṛti*, and to add to it *dyāvā pṛthivī* and *uṣa sanākta*, are complementary, though they are opposite in nature in the cosmic functioning of creation, sustenance and final destruction. Without the opposite, we cannot cultivate any thing. Therefore, it is no wonder that Indian art including literature tends to harmonize spirituality with worldliness, *yoga* with *bhoga*. It is, in fact, a very strong point of view as how to unite the ultimate with the temporal. This intense awareness of the ultimate and to know it through the temporal persists through the ages despite the changing pattern of Indian Art.

In Indian thinking the Universal Being behind the phenomenal world is the ultimate source of reality. Individuals are nothing else than limited

manifestations of Universal Being. The duality between the individual self and the Universal Self is illusory. The soul in individual beings in its ultimate nature is identical with the True Self (*Brahman*). This apparent dualism, which is in fact an optical illusion is presented in various metaphors in literature and the idea of one is established. The Hindi poet Nirala says:

You are the high Himalayan Peak
I am the ever-changing Ganges
You are *Śiva*, I am *Śakti*

The Indian literary concepts like *mārgī-deśī* (classical-folk) *śāstrācārā— deśācārā* (theoretical norms — local conventions), *nāṭyadharmī — lokadharmī* (representational— presentational) reveal the dialectics of continuity and change and also subjective — objective duality but with the aim to ultimately transcend it. One can proffer that Indian mind has mostly maintained that all beings in the universe are manifestations of the sole ultimate Reality and therefore one can always see an unity among all things. But at the same time this *nānārūpakātmaka jagat* (नानारूपकात्मक जगत्) is *dvandvātmaka* (द्वन्द्वात्मक) and hence alongwith unity or harmony one can also realise dissonance in our existence. But these two contradictory elements are complementary to each other and always stay in harmonious co-existence.

One of the best examples of this harmonious co-existence of contradictory elements as given by Tagore is Kalidasa's *Abhijñāna Śakuntalam*.⁸ Tagore says that on the one hand, we find series of ascetic symbolism in the play— the leaves of the hermitage discoloured by the sacred fire of the *yajña*; the path leading to the river wet with water drops fallen from the dripping barks worn by hermit lads; the calls addressed to king Dushyanta, asking him to protect their sacred fire. On the other, we find a series of symbols portraying life's fulfilment — nature beckoning the fresh blooming *mallikā* with breeze— beruffled fingers, sending loving messages to *vanajyōstna*, messages not of ascetic mantras but the impatient beckoning of the beloved. Between the two— enjoyment on the one hand and renunciation on the other— we have an exquisite landscape consisting of hermit maids, frolicsome companions, freshly bloomed *vanatoṣinī*, the humble bee intoxicated with its fragrance and the fascinated king hidden among the trees. This is

how Kalidasa has combined the twin concepts of enjoyment and renunciation in his notion of beauty, which is what the serial of life is made of. This concept, on account of its total grasp of humanity, lends a rare depth to the play which is a harmonious fusion of pleasure and renunciation, innocence and love, instinct and norm, ties and freedom, playfulness and religion.

In *Śakuntalā* if Kalidasa describes the harmony of life by ending the play with the tearful voice of Śakuntalā crying "Victory to my lord", at the same time he portrays the tragedy of existence. He hints at it, as says Tagore, towards the beginning of Act V. The song of Hamsapadika seems to reveal through a chink in the curtain, an inferno of agony. In the 5th Act itself we confront heart-rending tragedy and helpless tears which touch one's very soul. But this tragedy is part of life. Life in its entirety consists of both joy and sorrow which prompted Kalidasa to compare life to dewy spring, where the falling of leaves cannot be separated from the blooming of flower and therefore one can easily conclude that harmony in art is revealed in the description of life in its entirety and also by transcending it which brings about, as mentioned in the *Bharata Vākya* of the play, a perfect balance between the time-bound cycle of temporality and the timeless cycle of eternity, *punarbhava parigata śaktirātmabhūh* (पुनर्भव परिगत शक्तिरात्मभूः) and also a beautiful blending of worldliness with the divine and in the process the aesthetic experience of the viewers is heightened, intensified and totally fulfilled.

While discussing the essence of Indian art B. N. Goswamy says, "that in the context of the arts *rasa* is central something towards which things move and around which they so often revolve. *Rasa* is an aesthetic experience and also it is an art-activity and as an art activity (structure) it blends together the various elements into a dynamic interrelationship and shapes them into an organised whole and then the real world *svabhāva* (स्वभाव) turns into *vibhāva* (विभाव), a poetic world. The structure is a system of elements and the *rasa* model of *vibhāva*, *anubhāva*, *sthāyī bhāva* and *sañcārī bhāva* (विभाव, अनुभाव, स्थायी भाव, संचारी भाव sources, actors and settings, sensors, activated and primary sentiments) and acting (*abhinaya* अभिनय) music (*ātodya* आतोद्य), notes (*svara* स्वर), songs (*gāna* गान), mannerism (*pravyūha*

प्रवृत्ति), style (*vṛti* वृत्ति), and conventions (*-dharmī* धर्मो), effect a pattern which is an organismic combination *saṁyoga* (संयोग) where each element has a specific function through which it is connected with the whole determining the theatric experience or what we call *rasa*.¹⁰ The success (*siddhi* सिद्धि), of the performance of a play depends on the unity between the stage and the actors. In fact the central problem of the theatre or, for that matter, any literary form is to have unity, pattern or harmony ; in other words, it is a matter of technique. The technique or the process of transforming a 'real' context into an aesthetic context is to make a moment of the dramatist's experience come to life in minds other than his own. The purpose of a literary artifact is not to be, but to arouse a corresponding experience in the mind of the critical observer (*sumanas* सुमनस, & *prekṣaka* प्रेक्षक) which is possible when the particular experience is transformed into general experience raising the power in the spectator of entering into the literary universe and imaginatively experiencing it. This process is known as *sādhāraṇīkaraṇa* (साधारणीकरण) or identification with the literary world. But the spectator does not identify completely, as explained later by visvanatha, because at the time of aesthetic experience, the identification is neither accepted nor negated

parasya na parasyeti, maineti na mameti ca
 परस्य न परस्येति ममेति न ममेति च
 tadāsvāde vibhāvāde paricchedo na vidyate.
 तदास्वादे विभावादेः परिच्छेदो न विद्यते ॥

There remains the transparent but adamant fourth wall that separates the spectator from the theatre, leading to the attainment of *rasa*. In other words, it is a conscious identification *caitanyatanmayatā* (चैतन्यतन्मयता) and therefore one should not forget that *rasawada* is based upon personal response or reproduction, because *rasa* does not only express but suggests — it is a subject realisation *dhvanyamāna iti rasaḥ* (ध्वन्यमान इति रसः) and therefore when the spectator becomes one with the experience of the theatre, his analytical mind does not forget to analyse and interpret. This two-dimensional experience is, in fact, one of the dominating features of the *rasa* model.

Similarly Raja Bhoja makes a revolutionary ideological shift by rejecting Bharata's *rasa* theory based on the dynamic inter-relationship of the *rasa* ingredients resulting into an experience of *ānanda*. Rajan Bhoja, on the contrary, establishes the theory that only *sañcāribhāva* can take the form of *sthāyībhāva* and *rasa* can be evoked. In fact, Raja Bhoja was a great scholar of architecture and even wrote a treatise on architecture, *samarāṅganasūtra*. He understood only too well that to search for all the ingredients of *rasa* sūtra in painting, sculpture and architecture is a futile exercise and that one can have an aesthetic experience even by realising a variable (*sañcārī bhāva*) as expressed in a painting or a piece of a sculpture. In this way the plurality of interpretations generates a potentially unlimited range of experiences and paradigms shifts.¹¹

Jagannatha was the last of the great *Ācāryas*, who displaced Bharata's *rasa sūtra* by transforming *vibhāva* etc. into *bhavana*, by establishing that *sthāyībhāva* does not lead to the realisation of *rasa* but to *raṇīyatā* : *rasaḥ raṇīyatām ābhahati* (रसः रमणीयताम् आवहति) by giving a new interpretation to the critical terms *chamatakāra* and *alīhāda* and by encapsulating *rasa sūtra* as *bhavan* → *raṇīyāta*.

Raṇīyatā is used as a synonym for *saundarya* and beauty in the Indian context lies in the experience of a particular kind of harmony of the form and the content giving us a certain unique transcendental feeling. It is transcendental because the object of art is not the idealization of forms of human beauty as the Greeks thought but it is to communicate a spiritual message as conceived by the artist. The poet, says Jagannatha, with his *vibhāvanāśakti* (vision) coordinates (*saṅgātikaraṇa* संगतिकरण) various elements of poetry or drama. By coordinating the various elements of poetry, the poet brings harmony, *dravya samuccaya* and symmetry, *yathāpradeśam* in the structure of the text and ultimately the poet's "perspective" *bhāva dr̥ṣṭi* or *bhāvanā* is added, bestowing upon the text an overriding signifying power and turning the text into a *raṇīya* object.

However, if the body (words and meanings) is perfectly designed (*subyabasthita* सुव्यवस्थित or *samyak samāyojita* सम्यक् समायोजित) if the various elements of the text are properly coordinated (*saṅgātikṛta* संगतिकृत), if perfect symmetry (*sammātrā* सम्मात्रा) of words and meanings

is created, even then one may not find beauty in it without the existence of *lāvanya* (internal radiance also known as (*taraṅgāyita saundarya* तरंगायित सौन्दर्य or rolling wavy beauty). However perfect the body is, if there is no *lāvanya*, it will not look beautiful at all: *lāvanyam sanniveśa saundaryam* लावण्यं सन्निवेश सौन्दर्यम्). It is like the glow of a pearl radiating from the body: *muktāphaleṣu pratibhāti yadḍangeṣu lābanyam tadihocyate* (मुक्ताफलेषु प्रतिभाति यदङ्गेषु लावण्यं तदिहोच्यते). This is also known as *rasa* because an experience of *saundarya* is identical to *ānanda*. What makes for harmony in art is *rūpa* (expression) *pramāṇa* (proportion) and *varṇa* (complexion).

Tagore, while explaining the creative act, has spoken about *rūpabheda*, separateness of forms. He says that in sheer oneness, form can have only a potential existence but the varied forms if they remains separate only, there would be fearful loneliness of multitude. Hence the varied forms, in their very separateness, must carry something which indicates the paradox of their ultimate unity.¹² Otherwise there would be no creation and for that Tagore refers to the term *pramāṇāni*, proportion which indicate relationship, the principal of mutual accommodation and the harmony of the fact. But beauty cannot be always proportionate or symmetrical. One may discover symmetry in a lotus or in the structure of the Taj Mahal but the deep, dark forest, the starlit shadowy pathway in the silent night, the many splendoured aspects of human life as depicted in the *Mahābhārata* or the shabbily dressed, pulled down languishing Śakuntalā wearing a single plait cannot possibly be branded as 'symmetrical'. More than outer proportion these examples reflect an inner harmony of *bhāva* which inspires the artist and evokes the spectator to wonder and enjoy.

What, however, brings a creative act to life is permeation of *rasa* and as already explained *rasa* is no always realised by the dynamic interrelationship of various ingredients with which the *rasa* structure is constituted because to conclude this point.

1. Both Raja Bhoja and Jagannatha contested and made a paradigm shift from many to one ingredient and thereby circumvented the notion of harmony in favour of operation on two-dimensional levels.

2. Harmony between the form and content as central to the concept of beauty becomes redundant in the absence of *lāvanya* and

3. Lastly, *sādhāraṇīkarana* or identification of the text or the play with the spectator is just not enough, it also leads to detachment so that the spectator may act as a critical observer so as to derive emotional knowledge or what Coomarswamy says 'delight of the reason'.

The *Nāṭyaśāstra* further consolidates this notion of two-dimensional experience by using the example of the staging of the first play by Bharata with the help of his hundred sons, and some celestial dancers sent by Brahma. The play Bharata presented dealt with the history of the conflict between the gods and the demons, and celebrated the ultimate victory of the gods. The production delighted the gods and the humans. But the demons in the audience were deeply offended.

They therefore used their super natural powers and disrupted the performance by paralyzing the speech, movement and memory of the actors. The gods in turn attack the demons and killed many of them. Mayhem ensued. The very first performance in the history of humanity in which the Creator Brahma himself, alongwith other gods, celestial nymphs and trained actors were involved, should have been a thundering success. Instead, we were told it was a disaster. The implicit meanings of this myth is that the minimum that a live performance requires is a human being performing, that is, pretending to be someone else and another one watching him or her and that is a situation already fraught with uncertainty and therefore assertion of the poetics that the main purpose of theatre is to detach the audience from the world outside and ease it into a shared state of delectation can be contested. It is not empathy, harmony, unity but detachment, dissonance and plurality are equally important in the theatric experience. Myth of the first performance points out that in theatre, the playwright, the performer and the audience form a continuum, but one which will always be unstable and therefore potentially explosive.¹³

Indian mind, as said earlier believed in double time order, one, is the level of reality which has a time maker, as it has a linear tension. The other is the level of man's hopes and aspirations— the world of gods having a cyclical rhythm. The double time-order reveals the basic nature of Indian art which knows no anti-thesis between the immediate and the ultimate, the earthly and the heavenly, the sensuous and the transcendental, enjoyment and liberation, harmony and dissonance and accepts them as complementary to each other. Tagore conceived of these

orders in unison. Tagore says in his *Ātmaparicaya*, ¹⁴ I am the messenger of Bichitra, the variegated or the Universal Soul. This Universal Soul manifests itself into *bahu*, multiforms so that he may go on playing his divine game in playful tune, songs, dance, painting, words and other forms. In his poem, *sāmañjasya*, he reveals that

The Infinite wants the finite's intimate comradeship
And the finite wishes to lose itself in the Infinite.

The true principle of art, Tagore says, is the principle of unity between the Infinite of finite. ¹⁵ But the Infinite is not impersonal. In all creative activity, Tagore says, reflects directly or indirectly, man's lavish desire for the manifestation of Person. The communication of a person to a person is the creative act but sometimes person's ego hinders the contact with the Universal Self. The egocentric individualism conflicts with the concept of unity. Tagore relates an excellent incident about this:

Tagore often used to go on his small house boat and live for months on the beautiful river, surrounded by thick forest, in absolute silence and aloneness.

One full-moon night, it happened that he was reading a very significant contribution to the philosophy of aesthetics, by Croce. In the middle of night, tired from Croce's very complicated arguments, he closed the book and blew out the candle. He was going to his bed to sleep, but a miracle happened.

As the small flame of the candle disappeared, from every window and door of the small house boat the moon came dancing in.

The moon filled the house with its splendour. Rabindra Nath Tagore remained silent for a moment. It was such a sacred experience. He went out of the house, and the moon was immensely beautiful in that silent night amongst those silent trees, with a river flowing so slowly that there was no noise.

He wrote in his diary the next morning, the beauty was all around me, but a small candle had been preventing the whole universe from rushing into me. Because of the light of the candle, the light of the moon could not enter and hence the first step towards creative act is to be blow out the candle in other words, to replace the egocentric individual with the living growing personality. The ideal of harmony

in the *Atharva Veda* which attributes all that is great in the human world to superfluity. It says:

Rtam satyam tapo rāṣṭram śramo dharmaśca-karmaśca
ऋतम् सत्यम् तपो राष्ट्रम् श्रमो धर्मश्च-कर्मश्च
Bhūtam bhaviṣyat ucchiṣṭe vīryam lokaśmīra balambale.
भूतम् भविष्यत् उच्छिष्टे वीर्यम् लोकश्मिर बलमबले।

“Righteousness, Truth, great endeavours, empire, religion, enterprise, heroism and prosperity, the past and the future dwell in the surpassing strength of the surplus.” The meaning of it is that man expresses himself through his superabundance which largely overlaps his absolute needs. Tagore says, “in superfluity or transcendence, we have the genesis of creation and therefore the origin of art.” Here Tagore talks about the artist who goes beyond one’s needs, one’s desires, one’s worldliness and turns into a creative artist without any ego, a no-mind, only then one realises the Divine, the Eternity in this universe with whom the creativity starts. When one abandons one’s needs and goes for the left over which is symbolical of Brahma, the Creator (*yagñe hutassiṣṭasya odanasya sarvāṅgātakāraṇabhūta brahmāvedena stutiḥ kṛyate* यज्ञे हुतस्सिष्टस्य ओदनस्य सर्वज्ञातकारणभूत ब्रह्मावेदेन स्तुतिः क्रियते), the One, in fact makes a shift from outer harmony to inner harmony where the Divine manifests itself in the self or the poet. Then only the poet is transported to the higher plane of transcendence where he becomes one with the Universal Self and the creativity takes place.

These two forms of harmony may sometimes move in parallel or may at times coalesce with each other or at other time disentangle themselves from each other. In any even these forms are responsible in the creative act leading to the expression of beauty.

To conclude, it is not the outer harmony but the inner aesthetic harmony caused by superfluity defines art. In our lives all around us are scattered things of our needs, of our desires and of our material interest but if we can remain untouched by them and pass through the world without carrying impression, any impact, any scratch only then in that state of super abundance the creativity takes place and the inner harmony of art is realised.

- 1 V N Narvane, 'Tagore Aesthetics', *Rabindranath Tagore in Perspective*, p. 6.
- 2 N R Ray, *An Approach to Indian Art*, p. 145.
- 3 Vishnu Dharmottaram, III, 42.
- 4 *Alpana* IV : 46, V: 45-46.
- 5 *Ngveda*, IV, 58.
- 6 *Chandogyia Upanishad* vi, 9, 1-2.
- 7 Anandranath Dasgupta, *A History of Indian Philosophy*, IV, Indian Pluralism, p. 362.
- 8 Rabindranath Tagore, *Prācīn Sahitya*.
- 9 H N Goswamy, *Essence of Indian Art*, p. 20.
- 10 Indira Nath Choudhuri 'Verfreindung of Brecht & Rasa in Theatre & its Validity', *Comparative Indian Literature: Some perspectives*, pp. 116-30.
- 11 I N Choudhuri, 'Panditraja Jagannath's Aesthetic Theory: a modern interpretation', *Evam*, 2 : 1 & 2 (2003), pp. 60-68.
- 12 Tagore, 'Creative Ideal', *English Writings of Rabindranath Tagore*, ed. Sisir Kumar Das, Vol. II, p. 516.
- 13 Message by Girish Karnad on the World Theatre Day, March 22, 2002.
- 14 Tagore, *Ānuparicaya*, *Rabindra-Rachanābali*, Vol. p.
- 15 Tagore, *Sādhana*, p. 19.

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- 7 Ranjan K. Ghosh, *Concepts and Presuppositions in Aesthetics*, Delhi (187).
- 8 *Rabindra Nath Tagore in Perspective: a bunch of essays*, Calcutta Visva-Bharati 1987.
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16. K. K. Sharma, *Rabindranath Tagore's Aesthetics*, Delhi 1988.
17. S. K. Nandi, *Art & Aesthetics of Rabindranath Tagore*, Calcutta 1999.
- 18.
- 19. *English Writings of Rabindranath Tagore*, Vol. I & II, Sisir Kumar Das ed., Delhi 1996 & 1997.

HUNTER'S CATALOGUE OF ORIYA WRITERS: AN ORIENTALIST DOCUMENT

There are two parts to this essay. In part one, I analyze the catalogue as an Orientalist document; in part two, I briefly comment on the attitude of two well-known professors of history in Orissa to Hunter in order to indicate how the assumptions inherent in this Orientalist catalogue of Hunter have controlled the production of historiography in Orissa even to this day.

The Annals of Rural Bengal of William Wilson Hunter (1840-1900) was published in 1868. His two volumes on the history of Orissa titled *Orissa: or the Vicissitudes of an Indian Province under the Native and British Rule* appeared as the second and third volume of *The Annals* in 1872. He prepared a catalogue of Oriya writers under the heading 'The Literature of Orissa', the full description of which reads as follows: *The Literature of Orissa, Being an Analytical Catalogue of 107 Oriya Writers, Alphabetically Arranged; with a Brief Description of 47 MSS. of Undetermined Authorship*. Twelve pages in all, it appeared as an appendix to Hunter's *Orissa*.

Actually, it is not a catalogue of Oriya literary texts. It encompasses literature, or writings from Orissa. So texts in Sanskrit, and on non-literary matters — on Hindu Law, for example — also feature here. This catalogue of 1872 is a list of 'literary' materials probably intended for use in writing *the* history of Orissa.

Hunter did not have an idea of Oriya literary history. The making of a literary history of Orissa, for him, was not the business of a true historian. Though he lived for more than twenty-five years after the publication of this catalogue, he never concerned himself with the literature of Orissa again.

He has arranged the data in the catalogue alphabetically, not chronologically or thematically. One reason for this could be that he was unsure of the data. He did not seem to have read himself even

a reasonably substantial portion of the materials on the literature of Orissa that he has listed. Besides, there are a number of factual errors, and, importantly, the other reason could be that he thought the Oriya literature was inconsequential. Hence what seems to me significant is the concluding comment of the cataloguer in an apparently casual manner: "none of them, although not professedly translations, are paraphrases or *compilations* rather than *original* works" (emphasis mine). If we link up this observation with Hunter's historical perception of Orissa eloquently stated in his 'introduction' to *Orissa*, we can decipher his 'reading' of Oriya literature, i.e. his catalogue of Oriya writers as a *palimpsest* carrying, in a Saidian sense, an Orientalist story.

Hunter declares confidently, though ignorantly, in the 'introduction' to *Orissa*: "Even in literatures — the peculiar glory of the Indian race — the Oriya people have won no conspicuous triumph. They have written no famous epics; they have struck out no separate school of philosophy; they have elaborated no new system of law." Actually, however, K. B. Das wrote in Oriya a famous epic, the *Mahabharata* long before Milton's *Paradise Lost*, and Shakespeare's *Hamlet* — a favourite of Hunter.

Besides, what exactly is an "original" work? Every writing is a form of re-writing — and this is aptly illustrated in Oriya literary history, particularly up to the 1870s, the time when he planned his history of Orissa. Furthermore, neither Shakespeare originated the stories of his plays, nor Milton, of his epic. Therefore, Hunter's dismissal of the literature of Orissa as unoriginal seems to originate from a *very* specific historical perspective rather than mere ignorance.

Also, according to him, the people of Orissa "have fought no great battle for human liberty, nor have they succeeded even in the most primary task of subduing the forces of nature to the control of man. To them the world stands indebted for not a single discovery, which augments the comforts or mitigates the calamities of life." Any historian can tell us today that it is a baseless observation deeply coloured by a certain ideological bias. At the back of Hunter's judgemental mind is the mighty presence of European colonial expansion, in which words like "liberty", and "life" take on a very Euro-centric significance, minus its dark secrets and deeds.

Hunter posits "history" against "nature" while dealing with Orissa.

Orissa is man-made and belongs to Europe. It is "splendid", "striking", "magnificent" — the heroic adventure of the European quest, imperial and colonial, to control and subjugate the non-European. Nature is wild and untamed out of which God created man and his world through the shaping power of His desire. Hunter, as a historian, appropriates to himself this shaping power of God, though he pretends that he is only a "spectator". It is Nature Hunter sees in Orissa in the 1872nd year of our Lord: "Nature, long grown cold and inert in Europe, here toils wildly in her primeval labour, as if the work of Creation still lay before her. She discloses her ancient secrets of land-making, and admits us spectators to the miracle of the Third Day."

According to the Bible, Hunter's holy guide, day and night were created by God on the first day; sky and water on the second day; land and vegetation on the third day. Man, in the image of God was created only on the sixth day — the last working day of God. On the seventh day He rested. Thus it seems that the Oriyas, for Hunter, were yet to appear in 1872 according to God's plan i.e. in the image of the European! It was after all the Third Day of Creation in Orissa, to which Hunter was a "spectator". Needless to say, the spectator was a male, white European Christian, a scholar-administrator in colonial India. It is also significant that God is virtually absent in the Nature of Orissa in the quotation cited above, though the whole phenomenon brought the Third Day of the Bible to Hunter's mind. God's absence, however, is amply filled by the spectator's presence. This is a crucial and critical twist that Hunter gives to his narration of the history of Orissa. In the Bible, God is the active agent. But for Hunter, Nature in Orissa seemed to work on her own, a wild power in need of control and management. That is his attitude to Orissa, his very own spectacle.

Orissa appeared to Hunter, the European "scholar" as a natural "museum" of "primitive races, not in a fossil state, but warm and breathing". Here is lay his scholarly mission. Scholars in Europe "(stood) like Hamlet in the Elsinor Grave-yard", because their subjects were fossilized. Their scholarship, in the eyes of Hunter, had become, as it were, a tragic burden: the knowledge that everything perishes and turns into dust with the passage of time. In other words, Hunter implies that he is, because of his *location* in Orissa, free from this Hamletian legacy and bondage. He discovers his scholarly relevance in controlling and

mastering his living subjects without the haunting thought of an ultimate ending, which troubled the Hamletian scholars in Europe. The location in Orissa for Hunter, the Orientalist, though the book was published in London, was crucial for his kind of scholarship. Orissa was the material ground of money, privilege, and fame on which he could stand. And it is this that gives him confidence to make sweeping generalizations on Oriya history. A civilized man was working on a primitive, but not fossilized people!

II

One of the consequences of Hunter's notion of history is that the so-called professional historians in Orissa do not consider literary history as real 'history' even today. Literary texts, in whatever ways these are defined, are treated by them merely as secondary sources for history proper. Besides, literary texts are considered less of a historical fact or evidence than, for example, a particular shape of an axe or pot, though each of these elements is actually textualized and read in the very process of writing history. In other words, there is hardly any awareness among most of the Oriya historians about the epistemological implications of historical narration.

Consider, for example, what Prabodh Kumar Mishra, a well-known professor of history in Orissa has to say on Hunter's prose in a recently published book, first of its kind in Orissa, titled *Historians and Historiography in Orissa* (2001): "Hunter's *Orissa* [was] written with a typical literary flow of the Victorian Age, and it express[ed] to some extent the attitude of an Imperial historian" (p. 179). Furthermore, he observes that historical work like Hunter's was an "administrative" necessity (p. 2). Such remarks reveal a total lack of, in Said's words, "critical consciousness" (see his essay, "Traveling Theory"). In fact Mishra does not tell us why a historical work was an administrative necessity — for whom, and how. Though he uses the word "imperial", he does not seem to be troubled by it at all — as if it is a natural way of seeing things. One also cannot understand his phrase, "a typical literary flow of the Victorian Age". Perhaps there is here a vague admiration of Hunter's style of writing (note the word, "flow"). That this style in its sweep, diction and referentiality was deeply coloured by a certain notion of history, as I have suggested before, is not even

mentioned as a subject for consideration. No wonder there is no mention of Said's *Orientalism*, or any work of the kind in Mishra's book on historiography in Orissa, published in 2001.

It is amusing as well as disturbing to find that Mishra is merely echoing Nabin Kumar Sahu's observation on Hunter made in his edition of the works of Stirling, Beames, and Hunter published forty-five years ago, in 1956. Let us briefly look at Sahu, a far more well-known professor of history in Orissa than Mishra. The first sentence of Sahu's preface to his edition reads: *A History of Orissa* is a reprint from the selected works of three famous Orientalists — Stirling, Hunter, and Beames. Sahu's unproblematic use of the word 'Orientalist' is similar to Mishra's 'imperialist' noted above. He too thinks that the Orientalist approach is all but a normal and natural way of seeing the world. With touching admiration for these three Orientalists, Sahu writes:

Stirling, Hunter, Beames had to carry out their research with patience and determination. They had to learn Sanskrit, as well as Oriya and had to study local chronicles, legends and translations, and move from place to place on horseback or on palanquins to study monuments scattered throughout the territory. No doubt, their accounts are sometimes inaccurate and unhistorical, at times distorted by the mendacious information of the local pundits and occasionally blurred by their sense of superiority complex which leads to wrong conclusions. But notwithstanding these limitations, their works present striking exposition of Orissa's past and depict faithfully important features of her history and culture. These are still fountainhead of historical inspiration and a solid foundation for building further superstructures. In fact, these are illuminating as works of history and are honoured today as classics. (pp. xiv-xv)

The "today" in this quote is 1956, but it could well be 2003! If this passage is closely examined it is easy to see how the Orientalist biases are glossed over, and how it pulsates with a feeling of gratitude, if not obsequiousness, towards these Orientalist historians, who, as it were, made Orissa possible and visible to the whole world. Which world, and why? We are never told. Indeed Sahu does not feel it necessary to tell. No question is asked about the nature of "patience" and "determination" of the Orientalist historians. Were not these wonderful virtues implicated in the whole business of colonial control? Were

these not cushioned with pay, privilege and prestige? Actually, Sahu is so moved by these Orientalists that he sees them as all but Oriya patriots!

We find nothing in his 1956 edition to claim if Sahu is using words like "foundation" and "superstructures" in any Marxist sense. He never even saw a possibility if the historical writing of Hunter, for example, could be a making following a certain mode and method, and not just a pioneering work in quest of Truth, with a capital T, relating to Orissa. It is understandable, therefore, that Sahu, as a young scholar, is eager to position himself humbly *behind* these pioneers. This seems to be the main motive of his edition of their works. Symptomatically, he places his own long essay on the history of Orissa *after* the selected writings of his heroes, Stirling, Beames and Hunter. Instead of giving the readers a *critical* introduction to the works of these men, he feels honoured to carry on their business in a linear manner as in a relay race. In other words, his sense of the past or history is merely an extension of the Orientalist preoccupation with the so-called "facts" about Orissa. And Hunter was the chief among these three Orientalists. It is this native Orientalism of a Mishra or a Sahu that is disturbing. It points to the long, dark shadow of Hunter's catalogue, as an orientalist document, over Oriya historical writing in general, though, admittedly, it is not confined to the discipline of history alone in Orissa.

By the way, one aspect of Orientalist scholarship that Said does not analyse in depth in *Orientalism* is the manner in which Orientalist assumptions are accepted, and even venerated by the natives on whom the Western Orientalists worked, though he remarks in *Orientalism*, "The Arab world today is an intellectual, political, and cultural satellite of the United States. This is not in itself something to be lamented; *the specific form of the satellite relationship, however, is...*" (p. 322, emphasis added). But this observation, which has a significant bearing on all of us, particularly in Orissa, comes towards the very end of his book. Said also does not explain why the satellite relationship should not be lamentable in itself. The continuance of native Orientalism newly encouraged by the so-called globalized scholarship, especially in our academia, actually undermines the rise of an appropriate critical or oppositional consciousness to operate on Oriya cultural history.

**ONES OF GENERAL KNOWLEDGE:
LALA NAGENDRA KUMAR RAY'S ORIYA ENCYCLOPAEDIA,
BIBIDHA RATNA SAMGRAHA**

The emergence of the encyclopaedia in Oriya was delayed on account of a number of factors. The late arrival of colonial rule in Orissa (the British occupied Orissa in 1803, nearly fifty years after they colonised Bengal) delayed the spread of modern education there. Early attempts made by missionaries in the first few decades of the nineteenth century to spread modern education met with failure.¹ It was only after the notorious famine of 1860 that the colonial authorities were alerted to the need for the spread of modern education. The first college in Orissa came to be set up in 1869. The first Oriya weekly edited by an educated Oriya was launched in 1866. Another critical factor that had delayed the emergence of the encyclopaedia was the late arrival of printing technology in Orissa. The first printing press was set up by Christian missionaries in Orissa in 1836.

By the first decade of the twentieth century the conditions under which compiling an encyclopaedia in Oriya would be possible were available. These were: the spread of modern education through schools and colleges; the gradual emergence of a reading public and the arrival of printing technology. The emergent middle classes in Orissa now had access to encyclopedias written in English, especially the monumental *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. As the Oriya middle classes were increasingly engaged in the task of defining their identity in relation to their more prosperous and westernised Bengali neighbours, the publication of the massive 22-volume Bengali encyclopaedia, *Visvakos*, compiled by Napendranath Basu in 1911 was at once a challenge and an achievement to envy and admire. It is not surprising therefore to find Gopabandhu Das, an eminent writer and political leader to Orissa lamenting the absence of an encyclopaedia in Oriya in 1918.² In the decades that followed a number of ambitious attempts were made to produce

encyclopaedias in Oriya in response to this. Four encyclopaedias appeared in Orissa between 1923, when Lala Madhav Lal published *Bibidha Sangraha*, and 1947 when India attained independence.

In this paper I shall focus on an Oriya encyclopaedia *Bibidha Ratna Sangraha*³ (translated into English the title would mean 'A Collection of Gems of Various Kinds') which was published in 1936. This was part of a four volume project but only the first volume got published. It took the author eleven years to prepare and contains 429 entries with illustrations. I propose to look at the ways in which it used general knowledge to assert and consolidate an embattled Oriya identity and undermine, subvert and critique colonial authority.

The 1930s, the period during which Ray's encyclopaedia was compiled, was a time of great political turbulence in Orissa as well as in India. The year 1936, the year of publication of this encyclopaedia, is of great significance in this context. In this year, Orissa became a separate province, and was no longer an appendage to Bihar or Bengal. It had achieved a distinct political identity after a long struggle. From a larger political perspective, 1936 is also very important. Orissa, like many other provinces of India, was going to elect native representatives to legislative assemblies, who would go on to form ministries and govern these provinces, albeit with limited powers. It was a major concession on the part of the colonial government to the nationalists and it gave the latter a degree of legitimacy. As I will show with the help of illustrations later, these two critically important developments give the encyclopaedia, I am going to discuss, its characteristic tone and structure.

Lala Nagendra Kumar Ray, who compiled the encyclopaedia, was born in the town of Cuttack of Orissa in 1898. He dropped out of college to join the freedom movement though he later obtained a degree in law. He was the author of about 50 books and he brought out a magazine called *Nirbhik* (Fearless) from Calcutta. He was given a suspended jail sentence for two years for having written a scathingly critical article on an Oriya who had helped the British conquer Orissa.⁴ Not much is known about Ray. He is an almost forgotten figure and even the encyclopaedia he compiled is no longer easily available. All the same, even these few known facts relating to his life reveal two interesting facets of this character: his intimate connection with Calcutta, and his opposition to British rule. The first is responsible for exposing

to the tradition of encyclopaedia writing in Bengal, and the second his own encyclopaedia its subversive anti-colonial character.

He had subtitled his encyclopaedia, 'A Collection of Various Kinds of Items'. It consists of three parts: the first part dealing with the world in general, the second giving information on India and the final part devoted to Orissa. The reader moved from the general to the particular. This way of organizing and presenting information would give way in later encyclopaedias to presenting information in an alphabetic order. The encyclopaedia makes liberal use of photographs and pictures and includes a foreword by a distinguished lexicographer, testimonials by several eminent persons, a note from the publisher and an introduction by the author himself. It also includes a list of books and journals the compiler consulted and an alphabetical index at the end. These serve a number of important functions such as defining the role of the encyclopaedia, defining the historical moment when it appeared and indicating the need for patronage from the Oriya elite, which seemed divided along political lines at the time.

In his note, the publisher speaks of the dearth of reference books in Orissa. Publishing such books is difficult in his view on three counts: expenses, the hard work they involve and the need for expertise.⁵ The compiler, who certainly possesses diligence and expertise, now sets out to define the task of the encyclopaedist in lofty idealistic terms. He begins by saying that man's curiosity grows as a country gets more civilized with the spread of education. He emphasizes the need to update knowledge in a rapidly changing society and refers to *Encyclopaedia Britannica* and the Bengali encyclopaedia compiled by Nagendranath Basu. For people of Orissa, who are too poor to be able to buy supplements of yearbooks, there is need for a particular kind of encyclopaedia. I quote Ray:

What we need is a book which would suit everyone — a young boy as well as an old man, a school boy as well as the Vice-Chancellor of a university, a daily labourer as well as a millionaire; people from all classes and sections, in all conditions of life should find it useful. It would enable people sitting at home get news and information on everything happening in the whole world... Again the book would be as enjoyable as a work of fiction, as fascinating as a Purana and above all else, must be full of useful lessons.⁶

One cannot help being struck by the ambition of the encyclopaedist here, by the enormity of the task he sets himself. He goes on to refer to earlier attempts at compiling encyclopaedias in Oriya and finds them woefully inadequate. In emphasizing the uniqueness of his encyclopaedia he says that he has toured many parts of Orissa and worked on it for eleven years in which he consulted 1100 periodicals in English made available to him by a Calcutta-based Oriya industrialist. The compiler is conscious of the absence of originality in his work. He is also aware that ventures on such a large scale should involve teamwork.

The Foreword contributed by an eminent man of letters, who was himself engaged at the time in compiling a massive seven-volume encyclopaedic dictionary, makes a few interesting observations. He first of all undertakes a comparison between this encyclopaedia and another, which had appeared a few years earlier. Interestingly enough, he had also contributed a foreword to the encyclopaedia he now denounces as full of factual errors and inconsistencies. He gives a long list of such errors in his foreword. The writer of the foreword recommends the encyclopaedia for two reasons: first, every page in it carries a line from a couplet encapsulating traditional moral wisdom. The compiler of the 80-volume encyclopaedia followed this practice of giving quotations at the bottom of a page in encyclopaedias. The inclusion of photographs in the encyclopaedia is considered a step in the right direction and particular mention is made of the photograph of Emperor Edward VII, which adorns the first page of the encyclopaedia. The contributor of the foreword concludes by expressing the hope that this book should reach every household in Orissa, and that the encyclopaedist should go on to write a history of Oriya literature and Oriya language.⁷

The Foreword is followed by testimonials by nine men of consequence, who include kings, men of letters, and advisers to the British government in Orissa, leaders of the anti-British freedom struggles, a religious leader, a lawyer and a social worker. If one looks carefully at the opinions regarding the encyclopaedia expressed by these men, they seem to fall into two broad categories: those who feel that the book will function as a window to the wider world by providing information on history, industry, science and politics; one of them describes it as a gateway to the treasure house of knowledge. Others hope that it will enable

of Orissa to acquire an intimate knowledge of their own province. In words, the encyclopaedia will also open a window on Orissa at a time when its separate identity had come to be officially accepted.

These two divergent responses to the role of the encyclopaedia shape my approach to this book. I will attempt to demonstrate how the encyclopaedist seeks to assert Oriya identity by inserting facts about Orissa into accounts of India and the world and by providing carefully selected information on new dimensions of this identity. As a window on the world, the encyclopaedia, as I will go on to show, seeks to focus attention on facts, which undermine British rule in India. Facts here become powerful means for exposing the injustice of British rule in India. The encyclopaedia thus serves an important anti-colonial function. This, however, is not done in an explicit manner. Care is taken to express loyalty to British rule everywhere in the text of the encyclopaedia. I have already mentioned the inclusion of the photograph of Emperor Edward VII in the text of the encyclopaedia. The encyclopaedia also features photographs of the Viceroy Lord Linlithgow, the English Revenue Divisional Commissioner of Orissa and his wife. In fact, it is mentioned in the Foreword that the Revenue Divisional Commissioner was to write the Foreword initially. His untimely death led to the decision to invite an eminent Oriya man of letters to contribute a foreword. The text itself is peppered from time to time with loud protestations of loyalty.

It is indicated in the compiler's preface that a copy of the encyclopaedia was presented to the Lieutenant-Governor of Orissa and had received his approval. However, as I will go on to demonstrate a little later, all this does not deter the encyclopaedist from constructing a moral critique of imperial rule through strategic insertion of facts and statistics. How this escaped censorship is rather intriguing. I suppose, the grant of limited self-rule in the provinces under the Government of India Act of 1935 had contributed to the relaxation of the censorship laws to a certain extent in the 1930s.

As I have mentioned earlier, assertion and consolidation of Oriya identity is an important function of this encyclopaedia. Even where the encyclopaedist presents a fact about the world, he does not seem able to resist the temptation of bringing Orissa in. On page 199, for instance, per capita incomes of countries like America, Great Britain, France,

Australia and India are given. At the bottom of the table, the per capita income of Orissa, which was a province and not a country and could not belong to that table, is provided. Similarly, the entry on Buddhism, a world religion, gives us the information that a certain percentage of village teachers in Orissa is actually Buddhist.⁸ In the entry on Taj Mahal it is claimed that master craftsmen from Orissa were engaged to construct this great monument. A longish entry on the city of London is included in the closing part of the first volume of the encyclopaedia, which uses Orissa as a point of reference by stating that the population of London is 150 times that of Cuttack town in Orissa.⁹ Similarly, while providing a chronicle of major historical events in India, the encyclopaedia takes care to include events relating to Orissa such as the 1866 famine, the imposition of martial law in Cuttack in 1868, the formation of Bihar-Orissa province and the passing away of eminent Oriyas. Wherever possible, the encyclopaedist also articulates resentment against Bengalis, who were perceived as agents of British rule in Orissa.

Recalling Orissa's past glory or locating it in a larger scheme of things was only one aspect of this identity-building initiative. In subtle ways the emergence of Orissa from its feudal past into the world of modernity gets celebrated in the encyclopaedia. This is done by directing the reader's attention to clusters of unusual and interesting facts. The part dealing with Orissa is full of the usual kind of information about history, geography, population figures, economy etc. In the middle of all this, one suddenly comes across information on three interesting new areas: Oriyas who have established themselves through their own initiatives or in other words, self-made Oriyas, whose prosperity or eminence had little to do with birth or inherited wealth,¹¹ Oriyas who now lived in other parts of India and abroad or the Oriya Diaspora;¹² and Oriyas who have married outside their caste, religion or community.¹³ The encyclopaedist claims that there were 5000 Oriyas in Fiji, Bahamas and Trinidad. He even claims that there was one Oriya in South America.¹⁴ In 1920, according to the compiler, there were about 1100 Oriya prostitutes in Calcutta. This leaves one wondering about the sources of his information. Anyway, inclusion of information on these categories of Oriyas celebrates mobility, a fluidity of identity, a refusal to become prisoners of the past even while expressing pride in one's identity. The third group of Oriyas who married outside their religion

the name of one who married a Swiss woman, Frieda Hauswirth in 1917. She came to live in Orissa, painted a portrait of him and wrote an autobiography and two novels on Orissa all in

The other crucial task the encyclopaedia had set itself was the inclusion of a moral critique of empire and colonialism. This task was accomplished in a number of interesting ways. When one goes through the entries on various countries included in the encyclopaedia one cannot help being struck by the fact that the encyclopaedist takes care to mention the degree of political independence of this country. Mexico, for instance, is described as a semi-independent country. It is compared with a tributary state in colonial India.¹⁵ On page 95 of the encyclopaedia a list of the small independent nations is provided. In his entries on countries, the compiler takes particular care to mention whether these are monarchies or republics. The encyclopaedia also provides information on anticolonial struggles going on elsewhere in the world. On page 98, for instance, in the entry on Irish Free State, the compiler informs his readers that its people are engaged in a struggle to be free of British rule. Similarly in the entry on Java, reference is made to the movement for independence launched there.¹⁶ The entry on De Valera speaks approvingly of the anti-British activities of the Irish leader and goes out of the way to mention his friendship with an Indian leader.¹⁷ The entry on the League of Nations makes this very interesting point: although India is not an independent nation it ranks fourth among countries, which finance this international institution.¹⁸

The entries of Great Britain give a special edge to this moral critique of the empire. While the British masters are addressed deferentially throughout and claims are made that India has prospered during British rule, facts are introduced which present the British in a very different light. Take the following entry on the love of luxury in England, which occurs at the very end of the part dealing with the world. The encyclopaedist here informs the reader that Rs. 160 crores are spent by the British on tobacco, snuff and cigarettes etc. and that British women spend 80 crore rupees on cosmetics. The British spend 58 crores on cinema, 65 crores on sweets. The readers are then informed that there are 2,00,000 sweet shops in England.¹⁹ This is followed a little later by a comparison of the salary of the Viceroy of India with the per capita

income of his native Indian subject. The reader is told that the Viceroy's salary is 2155 times the per capita income of an Indian. The compiler does not stop here. He goes on to mention that the USA president's salary is only 12 times the income of an American.²⁰ This information is followed by even grimmer statistics. In the entry on poverty in India the compiler holds exploitation by foreigners squarely responsible for India's condition. To make this dramatically vivid, he tells his readers how much grain gets exported out of India per minute.²¹ He further informs us that, between 1793 and 1900, 3 crore and 25 hundred thousand people died from starvation and that between 1890 and 1900, 1 crore 90 hundred thousand perished because of starvation.²² In an entry titled the history of cattle in India, the compiler complains that milk has become expensive because three hundred thousand milch cows are killed every year to supply beef to the army in British India.²³ The encyclopaedist does not confine himself to only what is happening inside British India, he describes the condition of the Indian diaspora in Kenya, in South Africa, Australia and Canada. In the entry on Kenya the compiler openly says that the whites are intolerant of industrious Indians who have contributed so much to Kenya's prosperity.²⁴ Elsewhere he argues that Indians working in Canada and Australia cannot be protected against discrimination because Indian does not enjoy dominion status. He warns that this might lead to conflict between Asia and Europe for no Indian likes the way the India diaspora is being treated outside India.²⁵ However, the Indians are not always seen as victims. In the entry on Titles in India, the compiler wryly observes that some Indians are desperate to obtain titles conferred by the British.²⁶

As the encyclopaedist sees his work primarily as part of an educational project, he comes down heavily on the neglect of education in British India. Whenever information on a western nation is provided, the compiler never forgets to give the exact number of universities there. Germany, for instance, is presented in a very favourable light because it has as many as 33 universities. The entry on USA mentions that it boasts of 975 colleges and universities and 2,59,006 schools. In the entry on education in India, he regrets that the primary education has not been made compulsory in British India.

I will close by drawing attention to one interesting aspect of this encyclopaedia. While largely confining himself to provide information

in a systematic way about the world, about India and about Orissa, the compiler has also taken time off to reflect on larger issues and has included a couple of essays. Of particular interest is his short account of historical change. He has made use of the Hindu idiom of caste to explain historical processes. Ray divides history into four phases: the first ruled by the Brahmins, that is by intellect. During this phase the world is under the domination of religious leaders such as the Pope or the Khalif. In the second, the world is ruled by the Kshatriyas or the warrior class, who rely on muscle power. In the third, it is ruled by the Vaisyas or the mercantile class, by implication the British, a nation of shop-keepers. In the fourth phase, the sudras or the working classes take over, as has happened in the case of Russia. This essentially Hindu view of history ends on an apocalyptic note: deluge may follow the sins and acts of injustice of all these four groups.²⁷ I tried to show how the encyclopaedia sought to function as an instrument of consolidating the embattled Oriya identity and, more importantly, how it used general knowledge to construct a scathing moral critique of imperial rule. It was followed by several other encyclopaedias in Oriya, but none of them did itself such an ambitious task or executed it with such delightful intricacy.

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THE CITY IN OLD BENGALI LITERATURE

Long long ago there lived a hunter, Kalketu by name. He had a charming and devoted wife whose name was Phullara. Kalketu used to hunt animals in a nearby forest and his wife Phullara used to sell meat in the nearby villages. They had a small cottage in need of repair. But they were very poor and lived from hand to mouth. But honest and virtuous as they were, the goddess Chandi decided to give them boons. And indeed one day she appeared before them and gave them fabulous wealth, seven pitchers containing gold coins. So the hunter couple became very very rich overnight. Once they became rich they began to spend to their heart's desire on food and clothes and ornaments. They bought cows and buffaloes and elephants. Kalketu, being a hunter himself, buys various weapons, bows and arrows. And of course they hired a large number of servants and built a very big house.

And then he decided to build a town. He engaged hundreds of woodcutters and daily labourers who came from different regions with axes and hatchets and choppers to clear the big forest where Kalketu used to hunt. Now he ordered his men to fell the trees and clear the forest. He himself went to the forest with a group of hunters to kill the ferocious animals.

The woodcutters felled all the trees and uprooted various wild plants. However they left a few trees that bear fruits or give shade or are used as medicine, and trees that bear beautiful flowers. Once the area was deforested Kalketu asked the goddess to get a palace built for him. And the palace was built. Both Visvakarma and Hanuman took charge of the construction of the building. It was a huge and magnificent work surrounded by a wall as high as the *tal* trees. There were several mansions within the palace, there were several gates, many arches, there were lakes and bathing ghats, living rooms, waiting rooms, and of course a wonderful temple of the goddess Chandi, its floor and walls decorated by gems and jewels.

Along with the palace slowly started growing a city. People started to come. Houses were built; every house had a well. In the centre of the city— *nagar chattvar*— stood a temple of Siva and a community dining hall for the orphans. The woodcutters constantly supplied wood and the potters kept there kiln active to produce bricks. Kalketu constructed many large temples and houses and inns. On the western side of the city he raised hundreds of prayer-halls for the Muslims. They had a kitchen nearby where the slave-girls cook and the mistresses taste the food. The palace-town is similar to Ayodhya. Its name is Gujarat.

This is a brief account of the construction of a city given by a sixteenth century Bengali poet. Undoubtedly a mixture of fact and fiction, of mythology and history, this description is also a combination of certain ideals of the city architecture and actual experience of a sixteenth century Bengali. We do not know precisely how cities had grown in Bengal or what were the specific features of the Bengali cities of the sixteenth century. However, the felicity with which the poet describes the city of Gujarat built by Kalketu is in all possibility based on some knowledge of cities that he had himself seen or acquired from others. Two things have been very clearly indicated in this narrative howsoever imaginary. It is not uncommon for an individual to construct or to think of constructing a city either to commemorate an event of glory or to perpetuate one's achievements. It was also possible that new cities would grow around a temple that attracted pilgrims from distant places thus ensuring the economic prospects of a particular area. Both these facts have played significant roles in the origin and development of this imaginary town. The model of growth of the city is from the utilisation of a huge wealth acquired by an individual for whom personal comforts were not enough. This gifted person, different from the rest of the people, must construct a palace which will accommodate large number of people, heterogeneous in character, occupation, social status and religious faith. It is thus heterogeneity of the population as well as its largeness in number that makes the new habitation so important and so exciting. Kalketu clears a forest, the place of the habitation of the animals as well as the place for the plants. All urban developments in history are indeed an encroachment over the kingdom of the animals and more of the plants. Here in the story one notices a description of a tense fight between Kalketu and a tiger, reminding one of the more

archetypal forest-burning by the Pandavas in the *Mahabharata*. The poet does not mention how Kalketu acquires the legal right over the forest land, which belongs to the king, unless of course he has already bought the forest from someone else. However all the actions in the play operate within a mythological framework narrating the story of a primitive period, the forest or the open fields and the rivers and the mountains were not yet property of any one, but belonged to him who could acquire them. This primitive idea of the land penetrates into the sixteenth century description attempting to provide a theory of the origin of the city and its development from the forest habitation.

Apart from the fabulous palace that is constructed in the city of Gujarat, which is undoubtedly the centre of attraction, there are constructions of temples. Again one thing is to be noticed here: the place of the divine in the city itself. The city which is by definition a space, larger than a village, does not have accommodation for men or groups of men only but must have a place for the gods, either as a constant reminder of the power of the supernatural or ensure continuing favour of the gods protecting the city from dangerous by men and nature or both. Actually, the temples become the centre of the city. This is true not only of the Indian cities but also of the most ancient and medieval cities in Greece and Jerusalem or in Arabia. The town of Kalketu has not only a temple of Chandi, his protectress, which becomes the centre of the town, it has also a temple of Siva, and also mosques not one but several hundred, giving it, *i.e.* Gujarat a specific location in time. It is not a mythological town but a historical one where Hindus and Muslims live together and under the protective umbrella of the ruler.

The city grew out of its tension with the country, in this case, the forest. Fernand Braudel quotes Marx : "The contrast between town and country begins with the transition from barbarism to civilization, from the tribal regime to the state, from the individual locality to the native, and recurs in all history of the world until our own days." And then adds, "this town-country confrontation is the first and longest class struggle history has known."¹

Braudel argues that in this history of urbanisation there is an "uninterrupted confrontation with the countryside, a prime necessity of daily life; the supply of manpower, as indispensable as water to the

mill-wheel; the aloofness of the towns, that is to say their desire to be marked off from others; their situations necessarily at the centre of a network of communications; their relation to suburbs, secondary cities often their servants and even their slaves.”²

It is not possible to precisely indicate the minimum size of a town but they are usually a ‘demographic anomaly’, concentration of men and houses, always consisting of a hinterland consisting of villages that supply the city with the various amenities of life.

The city of Gujarat founded by the hunter who acquired immense wealth, as the story goes did not attract people immediately. Here one confronts a very important problem, that of rural-urban migration, discussed by the sociologists at length. This is generally known as the pull and push themes. The pull of the urban life is associated with a desire to enhance one’s status back home. In our times the goal of attaining fortune in the city remains the chief motivation. For the immigrants it is a temporary sojourn in the city. But the push they present another dimension of the immigration. The villagers are ‘pushed’ to the urban areas due to economic distress.³

The poet describes certain methods adopted by the hunter. He found that even after the construction of the palace, the city remained unpolluted. He asked for the help of the goddess who went to the neighbourhood town, Kalinga, and appeared in dreams in every house and told them that Kalketu had built a new town replacing a forest and would offer paddy, cows, money and gold to each one of the immigrants. She also told the chief of the village, Bulan Mandal, this migration to the new city would augur well. This persuasion was, according to the description in the poem, was not effective enough. The goddess with the help of Indra, wreaked havoc in Kalinga; she raised a severe cyclone which lashed over Kalinga with enormous power, the rain and storm continued for seven days, the agricultural lands were drowned under water, houses collapsed, and the whole land was devastated by the fury of rivers in spate. There is a graphic description of the suffering of the people and their final design to leave Kalinga and to go to the new city which promised economic prosperity, safety and security and a new life.

The medieval Hindu mind, perhaps the medieval mind anywhere, had always looked at the natural calamities, drought and flood and

cyclones and earthquakes as divine designs to punish men for their sins, and have motivated the people affected by them to search for a new home elsewhere. It was as much an individual decision as it was a decision taken by the whole community. Chandi persuaded each person individually and also requested the chief of the village to lead the people to a new territory of safety. The migration of the people from Kalinga to Gujarat is not only a movement caused by the physical forces of nature but also by a divine design. There is certainly an element of cruelty and machination involved in the uprooting of the people from their houses and to force them to settle in a new place. Apart from the fact that some of the medieval goddesses are not hesitant to adopt cruel measures to establish their authority, the history of new settlements is a part of the human endeavours, not always benign or noble. After all the city of Gujarat came into being through a merciless annihilation of animals and plants that once lived in a forest. The flood in Kalinga, however, is also an allegory suggesting the migration of people from an unsafe place to a more secured town that happened from time to time in human history. A common fact of history, the ravages of flood, causing mass migration and thus increasing the population of a neighbouring area, has been narrated in this poem within a simple paradigm of the wanton destruction of life and property by a malevolent immortal. Kalketu invites the leader, Bulan Mandal with open arms, promises all amenities, assures him of tax-free lands, and several financial concessions. In fact the details of financial amenities involving payment of tax and levies, and collection of revenues, that Kalketu enumerates in all probability, reflects the actual problems faced by the common men from the land and revenue department of the contemporary governments. For example there was *Baudi* (বাউড়ি), an enhancement of tax on the land, *Salami* (সালামি), বাঁশগণ্ডি, an amount of money to be paid to the landlord, during the time of taking possession of the land, during which a bamboo with a flag used to be planted on the land, need not be paid. Similarly there were other taxes, such as *Pārvanī* (পার্বণী) tax during festival, *Pañcak* (পঞ্চক) tax to be paid towards the “legislator”, *Guḍā* (গুড়া) and *Lonā* (লোনা) tax to be paid for preparing molasses and salt respectively, and *Sonāut* (সোনাউত), a tax to be paid in case of change in the rate of gold or silver, and *Dhānyakūṭh* (ধানাকাঠ), harvesting tax and also *Dān* (দান), that is sales tax.

This reflects the economic condition of the people in the sixteenth century heavily burdened by a large number of taxes. The city of Gujarat aspires to the condition of an ideal city which remains free from the tyrannies of taxation. For Brahmins, Kalketu promises, there will be rent free lands. Of course, this account of concessions does not give any specific clues in understanding the difference between a town and a village, rather it suggests that the difference between the town is only in size and population. The revenue system is identical in both the places.

The size and population however, are the most important features of the town distinguish it from the village in the medieval period as it is now. People in the town, too, are dependent on agricultural land in the main, as they are in villages, and the source of income of the citizens is still the land. There are of course the class of artisans, the potter, the cobbler, the iron-smith, the gold-smith, the daily labourers and so on both in the villages and towns. The landless workers, the proletariats are yet to emerge. This poem also gives a graphic account of the people that settled in the city divided religion-wise were as caste-wise indicating the heterogeneity of the population. On the western side the Muslims— Saiyed, Maulana and Qazi— settled. Not all of them were part of the Muslim elite, but a large number of them belonged to different occupational groups. There were *Jolā* (জোলা) weavers, and fishermen and carpenters, and makers of fine threads makers of paper and singers of scroll painting and several other professional groups. The Brahmins of different class and of different origin came from various places in large numbers. *And they attract students from far-flung places* (নানা দেশ হইতে আইসে পড়ুয়া বিদ্যার আলো). Then the poet talks about the settlement of the Kshatriyas and the Vaisyas. It is the density and the heterogeneity of population that makes the city a city. The division of labour continues, as it did in the villages, but here in the city different groups are formed according to their occupation and it is possible to speculate that there was a sufficient population to buy their service. The Ksatriyas are engaged in various works relating to the maintenance of law and order, practising regular exercises the Vaishyas are engaged in agriculture and cattle-protection, trade and commerce, the Vaidyas, one of the dominant castes in Bengal, practice medicine, the Kayasthas, the writer caste also follows them. And then came various occupational

groups, the artisans, and finally came the people of the working class as well, the *dasai*, i.e. the fishermen, the *Kālus*, the oilmen, the *Bāgdīs*, mostly engaged as the private army of the land, the carpenters, the makers of *gud*, the people who make (খই), the tailor, the makers of rope, as well as the painters. Came the *Karaṅgā* (করঙ্গা), the diggers of soil, the *Kāora* (কাওরা), who rear the pigs, *Bāuri Hādi* (বাউরি হাড়ি) who also rear pigs and clear the night soil and work as sweepers, there were *Cāmārs* (চামার), *Cobblers*, *Kāmilās* (কামিলা), the breaker of stones; and of course the *Śundīs* (শুড়ি) who installed breweries and of course the *rojniāt* (রোজনিয়াৎ), the daily wage earners. Along with them came many *yogis*, and beggars too. The poet gives a detailed account of these groups of people who assembled in the town.

Certainly a medieval town such as this hardly resembles a modern city. Brand reminds us that "...town and countryside never separate like oil and water because the more uniting them neither breaks nor pulls one way only. They separate and draw closer together at the same time, split up and then group." This happened in all medieval towns obviously. The resources of Gujarat came from the nearby countryside or the villages, from the agricultural land which provided not only paddy and other crops, along with vegetable and fruits, the nearby rivers and streams supplied fish, and the forest land supplied the hides and the skins for the tannery, woods and timbers. A city with a big population has also attracted traders from different parts of the country making a regular supply of metals and spices in the markets. Braudel informs about the pre-modern towns in the West that the "large towns continued to engage in rural activities upto the eighteenth century. In the West they therefore housed shepherds, game-keepers, agriculture workers and vine-growers (even in Paris). Every town generally owned a surrounding area of garden and orchards inside and outside its wall, new fields farther away, sometimes lined to three breaks, as in Frankfurt-am-Main, Worms, Basle and Munich. The villages of India were self-sufficient. It had never been without craftsmen. Tarasankar Banerji's *Ganadevta* opens with the tension caused by the smith who left the village for a higher income in the neighbourhood town. The village which is a self-sufficient economic unit cannot allow an artisan to neglect his duties to the village. The cartwheels, for example, were manufactured and repaired locally

in the village by the wheelwright and ringed with iron by the blacksmith. Every village had its shooting smith or makers of utensils and cutleries.

The description of the people coming to Gujarat as we find in the poem gives only an account of the beginning of the growth of the city. The people, however, did not come settle only once. There is indeed a continuous supply of newcomers. There are people who come for a brief period, the traders, the soldiers, the travellers, there were people who come and settle and take time to become a part of the existing population. All cities like to welcome rich merchants, master craftsmen, specialised workers and scholars and try to avoid poor wretches. Both cities had to accommodate all. This description also touches this point marginally but quite poignantly. If Kalketu is happy with the settlements of scholars and noblemen of both the communities Hindus and Muslims, he had to accommodate a fraud and a trickster who brought of series of misfortunes to the new city. However, the urban-rural binary opposition in respect of the general character of the inhabitants, simplicity and complexity, innocence and experience, honesty and duplicity etc, are not present in the narrative. The presence of the trickster, the villain, cannot be considered as an urban phenomenon, neither specifically rural but a stereotype without any particular relation to a given habitation.

What needs to be remembered is that the rural-urban dichotomy was not a dominant feature of the social life of medieval India. The cities were distinguished from the villages by the size of population, size of area and number of architectural structures that included temples and palaces, and in certain cases, localities particularly those situated near the river or the sea by the number of boats and ships, and the frequency of visitors of traders and sailors from other parts of the country, and occasionally from abroad. Until the British settlement there is hardly any radical change in the rural urban relationship. Weber in his work *The Growth of Cities in the Nineteenth Century*, talks of the "antiquated character" of the modern Indian cities "such as prevailed in Europe two or more centuries ago."⁴ (p. 124). In fact the medieval Indian cities are easily comparable to those of the Western cities of the pre-industrial stage. More than half of the population in both belonged to the agricultural group, as contrast to any modern city and economic life in both the cases was regulated by religious centres. The urban population,

therefore had a natural advantage over the rural population in meeting a larger number of people of various places.

Braudel mentions with reference to the medieval Western town about "the aloofness of towns". He observes that all the towns between the 15th and 18th century had ramparts. Of course fortifications were superfluous or unnecessary where natural boundaries like river or sea or mountains existed. Japanese tanks did not have fortifications, nor Venice an island itself, nor in the British Isles. And countries that were self-confident had ramparts formed only in their threatened borders—in Hungary facing Europe or Armenia facing Persia. In a narrative poem *Dharmamangal* (ধর্মমঙ্গল) by Ghanaram Chakraborty—written in the beginning of the 18th century recreating a mythological time very much like the *Chandimangal* we are constantly referring, there is an account of the construction of a town, as a ramparted one.

Hills in four directions, clearing the dense forest a town was built
surrounded by a rampart (গড়).⁵

In another section entitled কামরূপ যুদ্ধ পালা (the episode of the Kamrup war), there is a description of the city of Kamrup not only surrounded by the mighty Brahmaputra, but also by several fortresses. There are guards at every watch-station (থানা) in the rampart (গড়ে গড়ে থানায় রক্ষক যতজন)।

It may be also mentioned that the construction of the city given in this poem, though much brief, follows more or less the pattern described in the *Chandimangal*. Here also one notices people of various religions and occupational groups, the Brahmins and the Kayasthas, the Pathans and the Mughals, the soldiers and traders, also, conspicuously absent in *Chandimangal*, the prostitute. At one place "Prostitutes in large number and the lower castes innumerable. (p. 35)"

It was, unlike Kalketu's Gujarat, a fort town. The 18th century poet Bharatchandra in his poem *Vidya Sundar* which describes the city of Bardhaman, presents it as an ideal city as far as its security is concerned. It stands on the mighty Damodar! Damodar, like Brahmaputra and Sindhu, is also a nad, not nadi. It is also fortified and surrounded by a wide moat.

The city of Navadweep, on the other hand, is a historical place,

and was the capital of the Sen kings before the Turks invaded Bengal. It stands on the Ganga which provides it a natural protection. The city has been mentioned in the old literature, particularly in Vaishnava hagiographies, but hardly anyone has given a detailed description of it. Brindavan Das is probably the only poet to mention with great reverence, but he described it very briefly indeed. But he refers to Navadweep as a village, a *grama*.⁶

"There is no such village in the three worlds, where Lord Chaitanya took birth." But the description that follows hardly justifies the use of *grama*.

Who can describe the wealth of Navadweep
In one *ghat* of the Ganga lakhs of people bathe
Millions of people live there
All are expert scholars by the blessings of Saraswati
Everyone proudly calls himself a professor or a poet
Even the children of yesterday argue with great scholars
People from various countries visit Navadweep
Here they get the highest educators
Therefore there are students in large number
And professors innumerable.

This is the description which closely approximates the medieval university towns. We do not get much information at least from this account of the economic activities of the people. The whole population of the city, however, cannot survive with scholarly activities alone. Like all cities, Navadweep too had a large agricultural population and must have been surrounded by villages, which provided the surplus for the leisured class, the priests, the teachers and the landowners. This hagiography constructed on the model of Krishna as represented in the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* does not refer to the mundane affairs of daily life but it is quite clear that Navadweep economically a self-sufficient unit, like most of the medieval towns, with its own group of artisans and works of specialized occupations, such as the milkman or the carpenter, or the traders in spice, or the musicians and the physicians. Being a place near a mighty river, obviously there were boatmen and fishermen as well. The hagiographer of Chaitanya, however, has spared no pain to present the city dominated by scholars of grammar, logic and law. Had it been a 'village', a *grama* only, certainly great scholars would

not have heard about its reputation. The poem describes an incident of a great scholar who came from a distant land after defeat scholars in different places, and was humbled by Chaitanya.

গৌড়, তিরহত, দিল্লী, কাশী আদি করি
 গুজরাট লাহর দেশ বিম্বকাঞ্চীপুরী
 হেলঙ্গ তিলঙ্গ তন্ত্র দেশ আদি কত
 পণ্ডিতের সমাজ জগতে আছে যত ॥

(আদিপর্ব। একাদশ অধ্যায়)

This incident is again evidence of the reputation that the city enjoyed not for its economic prosperity or for any particular article of consumption, but of learning, its learned men and institutions. One also detects the presence for scholarly pride, if not some kind of snobbery associated with this town of learning. This is also reflected in the behaviour of Gauranga who ridicules the pronunciation of the East Bengali, which indicates the existence of a linguistic hierarchy in the town. Incidentally, what came to be known as standard Bengali in the 19th century took the language of Navadweep as its model. On the basis of this slender evidence I will only hint at the possibility of the growth of the language of the class of the educated Brahmins as distinguished from the rural speech. I will talk more about the urbanity of expression later, but it seems that the language was getting stratified with the growth of cities and their growing difference with the behavioural habits of the rural population. The description of Gauranga, the name of Chaitanya before he had renounced the household, moving throughout the city with his disciples, gets identified with the city. While Navadweep is celebrated for its scholarly atmosphere, the religious life with its conflicting forces is also represented presenting a contrast with the description of co-existence of different communities in the other texts. Obviously, there was a tension amongst the Vaishnavas and the Shakta which gets intensified into the activities of Gauranga who became the leader of the Vaishnavas. In addition to that the personality of the professor who turned into a god-intoxicated devotee attracted people from various sections including one Muslim. The conversion of the Muslim into a Vaishnava drew the attention of the Qazi, who punished the Muslim quite severely. There is another incident, very prominently described by the author, which indicates a strong

opposition by the Hindus themselves, towards the religious activities of Gauranga. The opposition was strengthened when the Qazi prohibited the music and dance and the devotional Kirtans of Gauranga. The response of Gauranga and his friends was extremely militant. Not only had they decided to violate his prohibiting the kirtana in the streets but came out in large numbers as a protest dancing through the streets of Navadweep and eventually stormed the house of the Qazi and roughened him with violence. This incident has been described by the poet with such triumphant mood that despite the possibility of some exaggeration it cannot be disregarded as a Hindu fantasy of the taming of a Muslim tyrant. This reflects to a great extent the Hindu response to the contemporary ruler's intervention in their religious life. This is one of the earliest evidence of an organized mass-movement against a Muslim ruler, if not against Muslims in general. There are several sentences in the poem: "Make the whole world free from the Yavanas." or

ক্ৰোধে বোলে প্রভু আরে কাজি বেটা কোথা।

ঝাট আন ধরিয়া কাটিয়া পেলো মাথা।

নিয়বন করো আজি সকল ভুবন

পূর্বে যেন বধিয়াছি যে কাল যবন।

(মধ্যখণ্ড। ত্রয়োবিংশ অধ্যায়)

অগ্নি দেহ ঘরে তোরা না করিহ ভয়

আজি সব যবনের করিনু প্রলয়

Torch the house; don't be afraid

Today I will annihilate all the Yavanas.

(মধ্যখণ্ড। ত্রয়োবিংশ অধ্যায়)

Whether the historicity of the violent action of Gauranga can be corroborated by other evidences or not, I do not know— probably not. But what demands our special attention is the nature of the city life in Navadweep. An intellectual city, with its large population of teachers and students, scholars and religious leaders, it is also rife with religious dissensions, but the poet in his anxiety to establish the divinity of Gauranga à la *Gita* (*paritranaaya sadhunam vinasaya ca duskritam* etc) presents him as the Hindu leader up in arms against the Muslim ruler. The religious life of the city eventually merges with the political.

Although there are no detailed accounts of the medieval cities in our literature and certainly not any significant and tangible evidence of any particular tension between the city and the village, the difference between the two in their physical features including the population, and consequently the manner of living, is not altogether absent. It was basically an opposition between the big and the small, the adjectives used for the cities are frequently, 'many', 'thousands', 'millions', 'enormous', 'exquisite', 'divine', etc. are only evidence of the reflection of a sense of surprise and awe. Similarly the references to Visvakarma or Hanuman as architects of these cities also point towards the largeness of the constructions. The medieval town being situated either on the rivers or on the sea, and surrounded by open spaces and forests were never divorced from Nature, and rarely did they violate the beauty and serenity of the environment, and hence no traces of urban-rural tension are to be found in our medieval literature. The city of Bardhaman described by Bharatchandra is quite distinct from the imaginary 'Gujarat' of Kalketu, and the historical Navadvip of Chaitanya in at least two features. One, the cosmopolitanism. This is a city which not only has a Hindu and Muslim past— it may be remembered that it was the place where Nurjahan spent a certain period of her life with Sher Afghan, till he was murdered. Since that time the city was famous for its rose gardens, one significant feature of the Mughal cultural life. Bharatchandra's Bardhaman is also a place where Europeans had assembled by the beginning of the 18th century. Two, the artistic component of the town planning and architecture. There are artificial lakes or pools, surrounded by flower gardens: *upavan* as distinguished from *van* where koels sing, bees murmur, water birds play, and flowers of many colours bloom. Very clearly in the poem, there is a celebration of the city, a place where people of many countries have assembled to acquire wealth and power, where men of various professions have found opportunities to earn their livelihood, a place where wealth and poverty are side by side, where the learned stay with the thieves and pimps and tricksters. Yet it is the seat of power, a place of beauty as well. Again in Bharatchandra one finds Hira, the gardener, once a seductive woman, clever and attractive, with the gift of gab, all suggesting urban qualities. She is a remarkable woman, who wields power through her intelligence and cunning and confidence in herself and also by her

verbal skill. Bharatchandra's women— whether Hira or the goddess Annapurna— are master of rhetoric. Bharatchandra was the first poet in our language to highlight the power of language in a woman: the verbal skill being a component of her personality, and also of urbanity. People in the city speak a different language.

One conspicuous absence in our accounts of the city is the woman. The poets have talked about people of different occupations, sometimes in detail, but nowhere is the woman worker mentioned. Radha, the most well-drawn woman in medieval Bengal, is a rural woman, belonging to the class of milkman. She, with milk and curd and ghee, goes through the dense forest of Brindavan to Mathura to sell them in the market. In several Sanskrit verses composed between 8th and 10th century, there are five representations of rural working women. Probably, by the sixteenth century, the women of the upper class were prohibited to appear in public and were denied the freedom still enjoyed by their rural counterparts.

এতস্তা দিবসান্তভাস্করদৃশো ধাবন্তি পৌরাসনাঃ
 স্কন্ধপ্রস্থলদং কাঞ্চনধৃতি ব্যাসঙ্গবন্ধাদরাঃ।
 প্রাতর্ঘাত কৃষীবনাগণিয়া প্রোৎপ্লুতা বভুচ্ছিদো
 হট্ট ত্রয়্য পদার্থমূল্যকলনব্যগ্রাসুলি গ্রহয়ঃ।
 শরণ, সদুক্তিকর্ণামৃত

the housewives are running, their eyes red (as the evening sun), they are anxious to re-arrange the cloth that has fallen from their shoulders—the house-holder farmer has gone to the field in the morning, in fear of his coming back they are making their journey short by jumping steps and busy in counting the money for the article they have sold in the market

Phullara, the wife of the hunter Kalketu, used to sell meat from door to door. But once Kalketu moved upwards in the social status, becomes the founder of a city, and Phullara, became the wife of a wealthy person, not only had she abandoned her earlier profession but also lost her freedom to move out of the four walls in the palace. In fact urban woman had to wait till the modern towns emerged with the British rule to appear in our literature.

NOTES & REFERENCES

- 1 Fernand Braudel, 'Pre-modern towns', in Peter Clark ed., *The Early Modern Towns*, The Open UP, London: Longman Group Ltd., 1976. p. 53.
- 2 *Ibid.*, p. 54.
- 3 Richard Basham, *Urban Anthropology, the Cross-Cultural Study of Complex Societies*, Mayfield Publishing Company, Palo Alto, California, 1978. pp. 73-77.
- 4 Adna Ferria Weber, *The Growth of Cities in the Nineteenth Century, A Study in statistics*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, N. Y., 1963. 2nd pr., 1965.
- ১ খনরায়: 'ধর্মমঙ্গল' । ঢেকুরপালা, সম্পাদক পীযুষকান্তি মহাপাত্র— কলকাতা বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়, ১৯৬২, পৃ. ৩৩।
- ৫ নবদ্বীপ হেন গ্রাম ত্রিভুবনে নাই॥
যহি অবতীর্ণ হৈলা চৈতন্য গোমাঞি॥ চৈতন্য ভাগবত। আদিশঙ্কু
However in Adikhanda, Dvadasa Adhaya, the word 'nagar' is used.
সর্বত্রদ্বীপ প্রতি নগরে নগরে।
শিষ্যগণ সঙ্গে বিদ্যারসে ক্রীড়া করে॥
Max Weber (*The City*, 1958. translated by Don Martindale and Gertrude Neurith) included in *Classic Essays on the Culture of cities* ed. by Richard Senneth, New York. Meredith Corporation, 1968. points out that many European cities in Antiquity and the Middle Ages had a special fortress or garrison, though it is not a universal feature. Japan, for example, had none. China had cities surrounded with gigantic rings of walls. Cf 32f.

Editorial Note:

This article, presumably the first draft (dated 27 February 2001), was part of a projected history of Bengali literature in English, and was found in Professor Das's posthumous papers. Published with the kind permission of Mrs. Susmita Das.

ERNEST HEMINGWAY, DEREK WALCOTT AND OLD MEN OF THE SEA

The sea and the island appear as elemental divine forces against which man is pitted to survive. Afa, the bravest of the fishermen, is a captain Ahab, an old man of the sea who seeks by challenging God.

At first sight, the browsing reader may be tempted to think that besides the fact that Hemingway and Walcott were Nobel Prize winners for literature, they have nothing else in common. They belong to different literary generations and traditions: the one to the American postwar literary scene, the other to the post World War II generation of Caribbean writers. The one is a white Anglo-saxon protestant, the other, a West Indian mongrel.

This sentiment is strengthened when in most studies of Walcott's *The Sea at Dauphin* (1954), critics hasten to add that the obvious influence is Synge's *Riders to the Sea*.¹ Walcott himself also strengthens this feeling when he states that when he:

read Synge's *Riders to the Sea*, I realized what he had attempted to do with the language of the Irish. He had taken a fishing port kind of language and gotten beauty out of it, a beat, something lyrical. Now that was inspiring and the obvious model for *The Sea at Dauphin*. (Breslin, 85)

Be that as it may, we are not, in this essay, concerned with what the dramatist has stated as his source of influence, his inspiration. Rather, we are interested in exploring what seems to us to be interesting parallels or analogies between Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea* (1952) and Walcott's *The Sea at Dauphin* (1954).²

Concerning literary influences and analogies, Francois Jost in *Introduction to Comparative Literature* reminds us that:

... a study in influences or analogies is a species of literary research that focuses upon the interactions and resemblances between two or

more national literatures, works, or authors, or upon the particular function of certain personalities in the transmission of various literary doctrines or techniques (33).

There is, however, a difference between literary analogies and literary influences. There can be talk of analogies or parallelisms or affinities if writers in comparable social circumstances produce works which exhibit the same literary moods though they may not be acquainted with each other's works. Even when the social circumstances are not the same, affinities can still be found between the works. Thus, affinities, as A. Owen Aldridge notes, "consist in resemblances in style, structure, mood or idea between two works which have no other necessary connection" (145); our task will consist therefore in establishing the various resemblances between the two works by Hemingway and Walcott. We intend to lay particular emphasis on the comparable social historical environments, characterization and mood or idea.

We will begin by examining the socio-historical environments or worlds which begot the two literary works: the America of the 1920s and the situation in the Caribbean. For each of the two areas, the most important factors that moulded attitudes was, in the one case, World War I, and in the other, slavery and colonialism.

Literary historians have established that the writers of the Lost Generation: F. Scott Fitzgerald, Ernest Hemingway, E. E. Cummings etc. were generally born between 1891 and 1905, thus spanning both the 19th and 20th centuries. They were therefore in their teens when the First World War broke out and many participated in non-combatant positions in Italy and in France. The war turned out to be different from all that their parents had told them, as they saw their friends, acquaintances and loved ones fall "ungloriously" in the battlefield. This, for the youth, was an act of betrayal by the older generation which they could, of course, no longer trust. Revolt against this betrayal took various forms, one of them being an espousal of all the values represented by their parents.

Malcolm Cowley best explains why this generation was declared by Gertrude Stein as "lost". For Cowley:

It was lost because its training had prepared it for another world than existed after the war (and because the war prepared it only for travel

and excitement). *It was lost because it tried to live in exile...* The generation belonged to a period of *transition* from values already fixed to values *that had to be created*. Its members began writing for magazines with names like *Transition*, *Broom* (to make a clean sweep of it), *1924*, *This Quarter*, (existing in the pure present), *S4N*, *Secession*. They were *seceding from the old* and yet could *adhere to nothing new*, they groped their way toward another scheme of life, *as yet undefined*; in the midst of their doubts and uneasy gestures of defiance they felt homesick for the certainties of childhood. (*Exiles Return* 9, my emphasis).

And so, the United States was considered a culturally barren land, an area that could not nurture and sustain the production of the finer things in life. As Harold Stearns put it in *Civilization in the United States* (1922), “the most amusing and pathetic fact in the social life of America today is its emotional and aesthetic starvation” (Allen, 191) and James Truslow Adams voiced the feelings of many when he said “I am wondering, as a personal but practical question, just how and where a man of moderate means who prefers simple living, simple pleasures, and the things of the minds, is going to be able to live any longer in his native country”. (Allen, 198) The answer of course was that this was not going to be possible because the young Americans of this period were fed on a curriculum that was geared towards making them “homeless citizens of the world” (Cowley, 27), were being exhorted into entering that “international republic of learning whose traditions are those of Athens, Florence, Paris, Berlin and Oxford”. (Cowley, 28) Again, as Cowley, one of the actors of this period put it:

Everywhere, in every department of cultural life, Europe offered the models to imitate— in painting, composing, philosophy, folk music, food, drinking, drama, sex, politics, national consciousness— indeed, some doubted that this country was even a nation, *it had no traditions except the fatal tradition of the pioneer*. (Cowley, 94, my emphasis.)

Thus, the “psychological” or “unreasonable” wound inflicted by World War I, the fact that the youth found themselves in a world for which they were not prepared, that the education they received only helped to deepen their deracination and to reinforce their homelessness coupled with Hemingway’s personal family tragedy, pushed him to create

characters who showed courage in the face of adversity, who realised that they had to hold tight against pain, because they could count on themselves and on no one else.

The Transatlantic Slave trade that saw the removal of millions of Africans from their homeland to the New World created a number of psycho-social situations during and after the “middle passage”. The slave trade became a tremendously important factor in European economic life and as the colonies in the New World increased, there was a pressing need for labour to do the job of clearing the land and tilling the fields first for tobacco, and later, for sugar. The fierce rivalry for these colonies between European countries, notably Spain, France and England brought about the extermination of the aborigines of these islands, the Arawak Indians, by the pirates who were recruited by the various powers and also as a result of the new diseases introduced by the Europeans.

With the founding of the Dutch East India Company in 1640, Spain lost all claim to exclusive control over the islands and as tobacco gave way to sugar plantations, the problem of labour became acute and consequently, the need for more slaves.³ However, when England and the United States of America outlawed the slave trade in 1807, English plantation owners turned to India and China for indentured workers. Eventually, slavery was outlawed in 1838 and the rainbow of humanity in these islands— of people especially from West Africa and India, were condemned to live together and form a nation. The problem, though, was that for most of the people, “home” was somewhere else, not the West Indies. They tended, at various times and depending on world events, to identify either with England, with Africa, or with India. The sad part of course was that, when they went to any of these places, they were not received as native sons, they did not belong.⁴

The curriculum in the islands was geared towards creating in the colonials, a sense of alienation, a perpetual sense of exile and of homelessness. As Amon Saba Saakana so well puts it:

Secondary school education had its own purpose: to foster a sense of belonging to Britain and to perpetuate that country's cultural traditions, thereby creating an indigenous elite, into Caribbean societies... English History and English took a prominent role on

the syllabus. With history the young Caribbean intellectual would be familiar with all the colonial details of Britain's imperial glory, and in literature the model of the English poem or short story, with its quaint language and images, would foster in the youths an inner *longing and dream to migrate away from the islands of their birth*. By providing a false consciousness, hence a divided self, Britain was creating an artificial crisis in personality (13, my emphasis).

Unlike the French who made it clear in the history books for the colonials that their ancestors were the Gauls, Saakana states that the British were subtler, they simply, for example, "removed any historical record of the existence of African society before the period of colonization." (102) "Consequently, the Afro and Indo-Caribbean intelligentsia were mental migrants, yet physically stationed in a different environment". (idem) He adds that "the logical development of mental exile is physical exile. Many Caribbean writers have, therefore, spent a great deal of their lives in Europe, emotionally and physically" (idem).

This feeling of alienation, this tendency to long for other shores was expressed by V. S. Naipaul in his much quoted pronouncement in *The Middle Passage* in which he asserts that:

... nothing was created in the British West Indies, no civilization as in Spanish America, no great revolution as in Haiti or the American colonies. There were only plantations, prosperity, decline, neglect: the size of the islands called for nothing else... History is built around achievement and creation, and nothing was created in the West Indies... When I was in the fourth form I wrote a vow... to leave within five years... and for many years afterwards in England... I had been awakened by the nightmare that I was back in tropical Trinidad. (8-11)

As we have already indicated, neither India nor Africa or London were "home", if anything, the Londoners from the West Indies could only by at best, as Samuel Selvon has indicated, "lonely Londoners".⁵ The ideal thing in such a situation, the rational thing to do in such a situation, because one can expect succour from nowhere, is to rely on oneself, to face every passing day with courage and determination. These, in effect, are the qualities that Derek Walcott endows his fishermen with, especially Afa. In his very important essay "The Muse of History",

Walcott more or less declared his independence when he said "I felt both a rejection and a fear of Europe while I learned its poetry... I would not longer wish to visit Europe as if I could repossess it than I wish to visit Africa for that purpose" (Coombs, 26). He further adds "I say to the ancestor who sold me, and to the ancestor who bought me I have no father, I want no such father, although I can understand you. black ghost, white ghost". (27)

In "The Marlin and the Shark: A note on *The Old Man and the Sea*" Keichi Harada notes that:

... from such great literary works as the *Odyssey*, *Moby Dick* or "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner", a great number of writers have used the sea as something that reveals deep realities of man and the universe. *It is a place where man's destiny and identity are sought after, dramatized, clarified.* (269)

In *The Old Man and the Sea*, Santiago, the old fisherman, has, in the Gulf stream off the coast of Cuba, been at sea for very many days without catching a fish. Alone at sea, his sail seems to bear the "flag of permanent defeat" (9) though his eyes, the reflection of his innermost self, bore "same color as the sea and were cheerful and undefeated" (10). A widower, Santiago is convinced he has the worst form of bad luck, of *salao*, but he still carries himself with pride and dignity. He will not borrow, for he knows that borrowing later leads to begging. The sea is the theatre where Santiago must act out his life; or better still, it is the world, promising what it will not give, taking back with one hand, what it gives with the other; kind and beautiful, yet cruel, at once *la mar* and *el mar*. And as John Thieme notes, the sea "comes to signify the existential condition and going to sea a primal encounter with death". (52)

The fish that Santiago catches, the sale of which would have, temporarily at least, taken him away from his condition of poverty, never comes to be, for by the time he gets to the shore, sharks have eaten all the fish and all he has to show is the skeleton of the marlin. His two bleeding hands, broken harpoon and broken-back, are a testimony of the heroic battle he had to wage with both the mysterious fish and the killer sharks. The old man, alone at sea, ends up talking to himself, calling on his hands and head not to let him down, and above

all, saying over and over again, so much so that it becomes a refrain: "I wish I had the boy. To help me and to see this." (48).⁶

Santiago, who is not religious and who like Catherine Barkley in *A Farewell to Arms* could equally have described himself as a "rotten Catholic", nevertheless decides to summons the help of the almighty by saying "ten Our Fathers" and "ten Hail Marys" (64) albeit mechanically. Not only do the prayers not help, but the pain in his hands and body increases, as if to remind him that he is alone and should expect succour from nowhere. Not that the old man does not know that he can count only on himself. He compares himself, or rather, his heart to that of a turtle whose heart will keep beating long after the turtle has been cut into pieces (32). He is an epitome of courage in the face of adversity. Talking to the fish, and to himself he says:

But I will show him what a man can do and what a man endures.
I told the boy I was a strange old man, he said. Now is when I
must prove it. (66)

And the narrator adds:

The thousand times that he had proved it meant nothing. Now he
has proving it again. Each time was a new time and he never thought
about the past when he was doing it. (idem)

Santiago, who started his struggle with the fish at noon, continued till late and "by midnight he fought and this time he knew the fight was useless". (118) That notwithstanding, he was still buttressed by his philosophy of life, which is that "man is not made for defeat. A man may be destroyed but not defeated". (103) And so, in spite of the ordeal he has gone through, or perhaps because "every day is a new day", (32) he decides to take a well-earned rest, before going back out to sea, this time, with the boy, Manolin.

Derek Walcott's Afa, like Santiago, is also a lonely, widowed fisherman who has to confront the unpredictable sea on a daily basis not only because if a man does not work, he will starve but because even when a man does work, it is not certain that he will be compensated for his effort. (45) Gritty tempered, with no love, child, dog or friend, he is angry not only because the land at Dauphin is an arid dry area that cannot sustain life, where food cannot be grown for children but

also because a man "can't catch enough fish to sell and buy a new ~~sail~~", (53) Unlike those who farm on solid ground, the fisherman has to ~~be~~ constantly on the move, because "sea-food does move". (53)

And that partly explains the predicament of the fishermen, for ~~the~~ brave among them: Habal, Raphael, Anneles, Boileau and St. Pierre ~~are~~ all in the bottom of the sea serving as food for the fish. And Afa cannot understand "why a man must work so hard/To eat for worm to get more fat", (61) why a man "can break your back for seventy ~~cane~~ reap times/And then is ashes. (68) That the "basin men call the sea never gets red" for men blood it have? (61) is simply indicative of the indifference and heartlessness of the sea, and by extension, of the universe in general.

For Afa and for the people of Dauphin where poverty is the norm, where there seems to be a conspiracy between God, the church and the colonial system to keep the people perpetually in poverty, life is like a "net in you hand to catch the wind". (66) He puts it thus:

God is a white man. The sky is his blue eye. His spit on Dauphin people is the sea. (61) ⁷

And the ordinary peasants of Dauphin who do not yet seem to have had a proper grasp of their condition, spend what little money they have to "build the church and pray", (68) though there are dirty women and children everywhere. And the dirt and prayers are not only characteristic of Dauphin life, but also of the life in the canaries and in Micoud. God, and his extensions, the church and priests are nothing but predators. Afa, in perhaps one of his most virulent outbursts, says:

God! (*he turns and empties the fish pail on the sand*). That is God! A big fish eating small ones. And the sea, that thing there, not a priest white, pale like a shark belly we must feel until we dead, not no young Frenchman lock up in a church don't know coolie man dying because he will not beg!... (*He turns and tears a scapular from his neck and hurls it to the ground*) Mi! Mi! Pick it up, *père*, is not ours. This scapular not Dauphin own! Dauphin people build the church and pray and feed you, not their own people, and look at Dauphin! *Gadez lui!* Look at it! You see? Poverty, dirty woman, dirty children, where all the prayers? Where all the money a man should have and friends when his skin old? (73)

The world views expressed in the novel and in the play, intersect, as it can be seen, at several points and the protagonists through whom these world views are dramatised, do also, have much in common. Afa, like Santiago, is a lonely, fisherman without a woman. He owns nothing and has just the basic in life for survival. The worlds of both works can be described as worlds without women. *In The Old Man and the Sea*, there are virtually no women involved in the action of the novella. And in *The Sea at Dauphin*, Paul Breslin reminds us that:

In the Sea at Dauphin, women appear briefly and anonymously, entering as a chorus and speaking only a few individual lines assigned to a "woman", "another" and "first woman". Like so many of Walcott's plays since, *The Sea at Dauphin* depicts a *predominantly male experience*. (86, my emphasis.)

Again, like Santiago, Afa is not religious, his rejection of God and Catholicism goes further than the former's because he associates all the forms of oppression with the white man and the colonial system. When John Thieme states that:

The ocean is an element which offers release from the constraints of the social world of the island, and for the fishermen it becomes a *religion which is preferable to the Catholicism that controls the lives of the St. Lucian peasantry*. (53, my emphasis)

We feel that he overstates the case. It is not the ocean that becomes a religion, but Man, for both Afa and Santiago know that they can count only on themselves, that man has replaced God at the centre of the universe.

In pointing out that there is obvious christological imagery in *The Old Man and the Sea*, John Killinger notes that Santiago may be a kind of Christ. He however hastens to add that "if he is, it is ... the humanistic Christ in a world without God, not the metaphysical Christ". (80)

And it is because of the unjust and oppressive order in which they and their ilk find themselves in, that they have to summon the courage to confront the challenges of every day life. In spite of everything, in spite of the impending death that is associated with their profession, they still hold their heads high even when they know that a "man can only lose". As Philip Young notes, all they do is ensure that a man

"can dominate in such a way that his loss has dignity, itself a victory". (99) And that is why, in *The Sea at Dauphin*, in spite of the fact that the East Indian fisherman Hounakin is drowned, Augustin and the other fishermen still prepare to confront the unpredictable sea.

Afa, looking at the sea, ruminates: "Last year Annelles, and this year Hounakin... . And one day, tomorrow, you Gacia, and me ... And Augustin..." (80) In spite of this, Afa, and Gacia have to set out "tomorrow again. Un autre demain." (idem) But unlike in the past, they will go fishing this time accompanied by the young boy Jules who will become a kind of disciple who will have to learn not only fishing but also and above all, the art of living in a far from perfect world.

In *The Old Man and the Sea*, we see this passing on of the legacy between Santiago and Manolin, what Philip Young calls the handing "over of experience and craft". (103) To the tired Santiago the boy Manolin says "Now we fish together again" and as he objects, saying he no longer has luck, the boy tells him "I do not care. I caught two yesterday. But we will fish together now for I still have much to learn". (125) A little further in the narrative he says: "You must get well fast for there is much that I can learn and you can teach me everything. How much did you suffer?" (126)

In the end, for Santiago and for Afa, it all sums up to the fact that man has "to face the truth, to acknowledge his fundamental aloneness and solitude in a universe indifferent to his fate... Man must accept the responsibility for himself and the fact that only by using his own powers can he give meaning to his life". (65)

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Bruce King, *The New English Literatures*, p. 126. For example, Bruce King in *West Indian Literature* states that "In *The Sea at Dauphin* ... the obvious acknowledged model is J. M Synge's *Riders to the Sea*. But Walcott's naturalistic play is grounded in the life and language of St. Lucian fishermen and has its own authentic force. (155) John Thieme in *Derek Walcott* also states that *The Sea at Dauphin* remakes *Riders to the Sea*. (37)
2. It should be stated though, that Walcott reviewed books by a number of American authors amongst whom were James Baldwin, Norman Mailer, Muriel Spark and *Ernest Hemingway*. We do not, however, know which of Hemingway's works was reviewed, it could very well have been *The*

- Old Man and the Sea*. For now, our research has not yet provided us with an answer. Hemingway was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature the year Walcott published *The Sea at Dauphin* (1954).
3. For more on this, see John Hope Franklin & Alfred A. Moss, Jr. *From Slavery to Freedom A History of African Americans*. N. Y: McGraw Hill, 1994.
 4. Edward Brathwaite notes in "Timchri" that after his studies in England it was clear that he could not go back, he had to look for a "home" somewhere else. He says: "For me, too, child and scion of this time, there was no going back. Accepting my *rootlessness*, I applied to work in London, Cambridge, Ceylon, New Delhi, Cairo, Kano, Khartoum, Sierra Leone, Carcassonne, a monastery in Jerusalem. I was a West Indian, rootless man of the world. I could go, belong, everywhere on the world-wide globe. I ended up in a village in Ghana ... And I came home to find that I had not really left. That it was still Africa, Africa in the Caribbean. The middle passage had now guessed its end. (Coombs, 33-34)
 5. Samuel Selvon in his novel *The Lonely Londoners* (1956) which depicts the pathos of Afro and Indo Caribbeans in London, has the narrator asking: "Oh what it is and where it is and why it is, no one knows, but to have said: 'I walked on Waterloo Bridge', 'I rendezvoused at Charing Cross', 'Piccadilly Circus is my play-ground', to say these things, to have lived these things, to have lived in the great city of London, centre of the world". (121)
 6. This leitmotif, which only helps to underscore Santiago's loneliness, can be found on pp. 45, 50, 51 and 56.
 7. On this point, Nana Wilson Tagore in *Historical Thought and Literary Representation in West Indian Literature* (1998) says: "in the people's mind and especially in Afa's sea, God priest and white man are linked in a relentless battering of the folk, so that Afa's curses of the sea are also rather ineffectually curses of God and priest and colonial master". (170)

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THE ETHICS OF DIALOGISM: A READING THROUGH TEXTS

Any interaction between persons is inter-action. By definition, it strives to avoid one-sidedness; it tends to be mutual, dialogic, and therefore eschews monologue. Any sustained one-sided force, insofar as it affects individual perception, elicits a series of more or less strong reactions striving to manifest themselves. (Yakubinsky 1997: 249)

The engagement of the Other in a given interaction, I would like to argue here, is not merely a dialogic exercise, but also one where the ethical stands implicated. While the posture of the One usually emerges in discourses through perceptions marketed by the speaking voice as authentic, its very nuanced placement in the realm of cultural exchange brings in the Other. And the constitutive strategies that energise the discourse and grant it its stature just refuse to cower under the pressure of the encompassing blanket. What is this ethics that stands implicated in a dialogic enterprise? The interactive nature of the relationships engendered in the texts under review rope in the ethical in terms of positionality. The interactive is an experience where a position, a condition of situatedness, functions as a given, one that cannot be understood without reference to the position occupied. Such a position facilitates the operation of this interaction. The ethics of dialogism then involves recognition of the Other's position, and while this act is both a response and the manifestation of a responsibility, it does not always emerge as a radical alterity. It is therefore not surprising that the recognition of the Other's otherness may not always surface as a set, wholesome subject ready-for-appropriation. Sometimes it does. During situations when it is not so obvious, it still possesses the potential to engage the ethical, one whose very prospect is forwarded by the engagement of the interactive. The dialogic, by its own operative logic of interaction, demonstrates the situation of differing positions. Once positioned and engaged in the dialogic exercise, the subject confronts the Other's condition. Another aspect here is the valuation process. When

Ivan Karamazov presents the Grand Inquisitor as his metaphor of doubt challenging Alyosha's faith in Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov*, the Grand Inquisitor demands evaluation. Alyosha cannot escape the process. Sometimes associated with the juridical, the ethical is seen as determinable, a condition where side-taking is possible. But all subjects do not submit themselves to the rigour of the juridical, and neither do they always offer the matter as a choice between binaries. The positions of these constitutive elements shift, gyrate and fluctuate in an intertextual play; it's a mode that contributes to the uniqueness of each discursive formation. While the pragmatics of the situation may facilitate the emergence of the One, the fissures that predicate its situatedness offer the Other space to manoeuvre. The complexity that situates any formulation of the condition of responsibility is fraught with a self-evidencing structure of otherness, an inevitable programme that surfaces in its thematic organisation. Certain issues— responsibility, identity, and the production of ideology are striking ones— refuse to submit to essentialising procedures. Even in provisionally accepted parameters there is room for a dialogic violation of given structures that advertise its uniqueness. Derrida's comments on the problems of "being responsible" posits the organisational difficulty of refuting otherness I have been arguing above: "The concept of responsibility is one of those strange concepts that give food for thought without giving themselves over to thematization." (Derrida 1995: 27)

I would like here to read the ethics involved in the dialogic enterprise, especially as it conditions the fictional space, through some texts. The texts are primarily those of Saurav Kumar Chaliha, the most important Assamese short story writer of the twentieth century. And though I will engage the fictions of others, the conditions of the discussion will be the ones set through the matrix of Chaliha's paradigm.

Let's consider some examples. I would like here to introduce one of Saurav Chaliha's short stories "Doesn't Even Let Sleep,"¹ and one of the positions that I would argue for is the distinctively multivoiced orientation informing the narrative. More than the narrative voice/s occupying cross-referential narrative spaces in the story, there is a deliberate fudging of the expected straight-cut character delineating paradigms associated with realist representations. The story deals with the three characters' inability to sleep due to different reasons. When

the story opens, the narrator presents his dilemma— a riddle (the passage cited and translated below) which prevents him from having a sound sleep. The riddle was circulated by Dambaru Gogoi who also works in Das's office. Das speculates about Gogoi's position in the same night

where Gogoi is visualised as having a blissful night, full with a detective novel and at least without Das's worries. Das's visualisation of Gogoi comes after he goes to office the next day, with hardly any sleep at all. This is followed by a sub-section titled "Dambaru Gogoi's Problem" where Gogoi is shown spending his night with a detective novel

a compelling whodunit that does not allow him to sleep. However, another theme of the story is introduced here— that of the impending transfer of a member of the office staff to Jorhat, and it could be any one— Das, Gogoi himself or Tarun Barua. Tarun Barua is the third protagonist, whose night is the subject of the next sub-section titled "Tarun Barua's Problem". Tarun Barua's love life is one of the topics that occupy his colleagues' area of interest and while each one of them are concerned about the transfer, the riddles and speculation about the others make up the rest of the story. Midway through the story, Tarun Barua supplies the solution to the riddle in the passage quoted, while Dambaru Gogoi comes up with other riddles to vex Das. Thus the subject of the story is a combination of riddles (it ends with one), speculations about how others spend their nights, and the expected transfer of any one of them to Jorhat.

Unlike a straight monologic discourse,² so commonly explored by his contemporaries, Chaliha's style and language are tailored to engage the narrative as a site for the play of events. It must also be noted that the use the narrative as the site of multi-voicedness grants his characters a status that goes beyond the author-prescribed condition in conventional narratives. If Chaliha's characters seem to possess a uniqueness that refuse to be coalesced into the fabric of the authorial intention, the credit goes to the cultivation of a craftsmanship that is peculiar to Chaliha. In this story the three subjects, Das (the speaker), Dambaru Gogoi, and Tarun Barua are engaged in constituting the other through telescopic interpellation. Interestingly, the privilege of centring is not accorded to any of them. By frustrating the conventional condition of thematic "unity", "Doesn't Even Let Sleep" uses the dialogic principle to foreground the Other: in a manner that marks the narrative scheme

through its structure. In other words, “Doesn’t Even Let Sleep” dialogizes the narrative space by introducing multi-voicedness as a constitutive strategy. Each of the three subjects is shown as engaging in constituting the other/s through the dialogic mode on *behalf of the other*. The narrative begins innocuously with the narrator confronting a riddle:

Keeping awake till late in the night I’m trying to solve this problem:

King Bahubikram has three ministers— Parambudhi, Mahabudhi, and Atibudhi. They are extremely intelligent, but also very crafty. One day the king comes to know that all three of them are involved in a conspiracy against him. He decided to imprison them, but Queen Sumati made him realise that in such a case it would be impossible to run the kingdom, at least one of them must be kept on as a minister (and then he would not be able to conspire alone). Which one? The shrewdest of them all. But how could that be decided? Queen Sumati suggested that a test be held. Accordingly, King Bahubikram took three white caps and two black ones in a bag, and after showing it to the ministers, placed the white caps on each of them from behind, while the remaining black ones were put in the bag without them seeing it. Each minister could see the white caps on the heads of his compatriots, but is unaware of the cap’s colour on his own head. The king said, now, the first one to tell the cap’s colour on his own head will become free and be made my minister. ... After some time, Parambudhi exclaimed, “Your Majesty, you have placed a white cap upon my head too!”

Question: How did Parambudhi think out the answer?

Really, how did he do it? Strange! I’m anxiously tumbling around in bed, and frequently changing sides. (Chaliha 2001: 235)

Riddles and speculations mark the text’s discourse. And the stratification of the narrative into sections with sub-headings such as “Dambaru Gogoi’s Problem” and “Tarun Barua’s Problem” augments the condition of speculative dialogism. In these above-mentioned sections the thinker/speaker is the one whose name heads the section. Each of the three subjects devises strategies to constitute the Other in an act of dialogization, thus situating them in their respective worldviews. This process of attributing a discourse to the Other is organised to both inform and invite questions about the positions held. Bakhtin’s gloss applies well here:

“[T]he very orientation of the narrative— and this is equally true of narration by the author, by a narrator, or by one of the characters

must necessarily be quite different than in novels of the monologic type. The position from which a story is told, a portrayal built, or information provided must be oriented in a new way to this world a world of autonomous subjects, not objects." (Bakhtin 1984: 7)

The independence of the subjects is structured through subtle narrative negotiation. For instance, the sparing yet telling use of parenthesis to forward the narrative is not just the narrator's space; it involves both Gogoi and Barua who also interpellate on *behalf* of Das. Absence is worked out as the space for attribution. While Das's sleeplessness is caused by Gogoi's riddle, the *situation* of the impending transfer and speculation about the victim of the proposed administrative axe places each of them in a common field. The operative register that accommodates the subjects in their act of dialogization combines the ethic of othering with the act of imaging. The imputations are thus morally-laden exercises. It is in the assumption of responsibility *for* the other that the dialogic makes evident its ethical function. Obviously this ethics is not demonstrated in terms of binaries. The engagement of the Other *in terms determined by the One* invite postures that are not available for independent representation.

"Doesn't Even Let Sleep" technically has just one narrator: Das. But in constructing the Other (constituted by Dambaru Gogoi and Tarun Barua), Das grants them space where he becomes the subject of *their* discourses. Although he admits that these discourses are actually his, he is allowing his own image to occupy the stage in a formation that would not have been otherwise possible. Telescoping his narrated image through the agency of the formulated Other, Das submits to the logic of the dialogic, where his space is no longer his as such.

And when he lets the matter out of the bag— about the status of the discourses that he has constructed— he admits that he has drawn the material from the arena of public circulation, the rumour-mill. Appropriation is the act, an act that is bound by its own ethic, one for which Das cannot be held wholly responsible, even though his act is a response to the circulatory devices at work. The ethical here involves the act of retrieval from the public domain, an act that is negotiated within Das's narrative and presented as the discourse of the other. How do we situate this act of appropriation? Apart from concerning the issue of authorship, the authenticity of the version that Das wrests from the

domain of public circulation is simultaneously involved. Let us examine Das's admission first:

Of course, these thoughts of Tarun Barua have been constructed according to legend — the boy has never uttered a word about this — if Dambaru Gogoi sometimes seeks to 'humour' it, he quickly jumps to some other matter with a sweet smile — the sweet smile is of course really attractive... (Chaliha 2001: 238)

The 'legend' is the product of the rumour-mill and idle talk, talk that is part of the circuit occupied by both Tarun Barua and Das. The operations of the rumour-mill are not easy to decipher. Derrida's supplement seems pertinent here:

At the origin there is a rumour, an 'it is said', an 'it is said that he is supposed to have said'. The origin of a rumour is always unknown. Indeed, this is how a rumour is identified. To say 'the origin is not known and never will be' is always— let us not doubt the importance of this risk—to open up the space of rumour and to license the 'it is said', 'idle talk', and the myth. But the question 'Who signs a rumour?' does not necessarily amount to the question 'Who becomes responsible for its proverbialization?' (Derrida 1997: 176)

The narrator's admission, however, cannot undo the dialogic scheme of the narrative, one where the discursive participation of the other is ensured. Thus, the narrator's mere signature and framing of the 'legend' does not nullify the status of the version that he receives and re-presents in his narrative. Once released for public consumption, the matter of a rumour, narrative or text cannot be just ordained through its incorporation into a narrative; while Das is not 'responsible for its proverbialization', he is accountable for appropriating the 'legend' within a discourse that he is willing to pass on under his name. In this case the dialogic function operates at two ostensible levels:

(a) the discourses sectioned within the narrative as belonging to "Dambaru Gogoi" and "Tarun Barua" are strategies that acquire a logic of their own and work as independent registers that impinge upon the narrator's discourse; and

(b) the narrator's intervention immediately after the Tarun Barua section is an ethical act, one that qualifies the discourse re-presented as Barua's.

Please note that the articulation under Barua's name is derived from a pre-existing source, one that is already realised as 'legend', and while Das possesses the manipulative power as regards the organisation of the matter, he cannot alter the basic ingredients of the 'legend'. For he only receives it in a certain baggage, within certain parameters, and he is incapable of disengaging it from the matter of the 'legend' itself. So a distinction needs to be made between responsibility and response: he is not responsible for the circulation of the 'legend' of which he is one of the many recipients, but he is responsible for the way he responds to it, manages it and utilises its material for purposes of his narrative.

In Margaret Atwood's *The Blind Assassin* a 'revelation' about the 'real author' does not undo the text's authorial inscription, which released for and consumed by the public can no longer be captioned under the name of the 'real author'. *The Blind Assassin* has two narratives: the first is Iris Chase's recounting of her life story and the other is the text of *The Blind Assassin*, a posthumously released novel apparently authored by Iris' sister Laura Chase, who died when she was just twenty-five. When *The Blind Assassin* by Laura Chase was first released in 1947, it had the following biographical note on the inside jacket flap:

Laura Chase wrote *The Blind Assassin* before the age of twenty-five. It was her first novel; sadly, it will also be her last, as she died in a tragic automobile accident in 1945. We are proud to present the work of this young and gifted writer in its first astonishing flowering. (Atwood 2001: 526)

Throughout the novel Laura Chase is celebrated, institutionalized and mythologized as the author of *The Blind Assassin*. In fact, almost all public pronouncements relating to the Chase family are threaded through the association of Laura, and she becomes the badge that grants the family its social status. Here are some examples of the Laura institution at work in the novel: "*The Globe and Mail*, June 4, 1947: GRIFFEN FOUND IN SAILBOAT— ... Mr Griffen was the brother-in-law of the late Laura Chase, who made her posthumous début as a novelist this spring..." (Atwood 2001: 16); "*The Toronto Star*, August 25, 1975: NOVELIST'S NIECE VICTIM OF FALL— Aimee Griffen, thirty-eight, daughter of the late Richard E. Griffen, the eminent industrialist, and niece of noted authoress Laura Chase..." (Atwood 2001: 21); "*The Colonel*

Henry Parkman High School Home and School and Alumni Association Bulletin, Port Ticonderoga, May 1998: LAURA CHASE MEMORIAL AWARD TO BE PRESENTED ... Named in honour of famed local authoress Laura Chase, the first Prize will be presented at Graduation in June..." (Atwood 2001: 34)

The Laura Chase text runs parallel to the life story of Iris, acquiring an independence that cannot be subsumed within the frame of revelation. Bakhtin's analysis of Dostoevsky's dialogism applies here very well. Commenting on Dostoevsky's dialogism Bakhtin writes:

Dostoevsky's novel is dialogic. It is constructed not as the whole of a single consciousness, absorbing other consciousnesses as objects into itself, but as a whole formed by the interaction of several consciousnesses, none of which entirely becomes an object for the other; this interaction provides no support for the viewer who would objectify an entire event according to some ordinary monologic category (thematically, lyrically or cognitively) — and this consequently makes the viewer also a participant. Not only does the novel give no form support outside the rupture-prone world of dialogue for a third, monologically all-encompassing consciousness — but on the contrary, everything in the novel is structured to make dialogic opposition inescapable. (Bakhtin 1984: 18)

In Atwood's novel, authorship invites an ethical condition as a necessary distinction in terms of the Chase sisters' position within the structures of the given community. While the energies of social discourse facilitates dialogues between Iris' narrative and the issue of origins it further manifests the significance of "existence" as an ideological and ethical condition. Michael Holquist's analysis of Bakhtin's idea of answerability involving existence itself should serve to exemplify this situation:

Bakhtin conceives existence as the kind of book we call a novel, or more accurately as many novels (the radically manifold world proposed by Bakhtin looks much like Borges' Library of Babel), for all of us write our own text, a text that is then called our life. Bakhtin uses the literary genre of the novel as an allegory for representing existence as the condition of authoring. (Holquist 2002: 30)

The revelatory chapter is tellingly titled "The heap of rubble" hinting at the collapse of the Laura institution, the break-up of the façade that

was persisted with for so long, but even this dismantling of the constructed is inadequate to resist the dialogic opposition that the Laura Chase metaphor presents. Why did Iris manufacture the institution of Laura? While questions of motive and intention arise, there also exists the ground for an ethical argument, one for which Iris owns responsibility. The dialogic space in Atwood's novel is also the ethical ground, a negotiating space that Iris is made to manipulate. Once circulated, the novel that carries Laura's name acquires its own space in the public realm and that space is the one crafted from within the narrative of *The Blind Assassin*. And although this independence and scope for dialogic opposition is Iris's grant, as the admission quoted below shows, she's not in a position to determine its movement.

As for the book, Laura didn't write a word of it. But you must have known that for some time. I wrote it myself, during my long evenings alone, when I was waiting for Alex to come back, and then afterwards, once I knew he wouldn't. (Atwood 2001: 529)

This revelation is followed by the recognition that the text now cannot be just her own:

But on second thought it was merely doing justice, because I can't. Laura didn't write a word. Technically that's accurate, but in another sense — what Laura would have called the spiritual sense — you could say she was my collaborator. The real author was neither one of us: a fist is more than the sum of its fingers. (Atwood 2001: 529-30)

This is an evaluative act. One that reads Laura, a constituent of the 'fist' visible to the public, not made by 'Laura Chase' alone and not by Iris alone either. As I have said above the ethics of this interaction between these many agencies — Laura Chase (writer of *The Blind Assassin*), Iris the confessor, Laura (now de-mythologized by Iris's confession), Iris ('the real author'), Iris's image of Laura — does not offer itself for itemized and separate case-studies. Altogether implicated, Iris confronts the otherness of these agencies, which by its dialogicality refuse to submit to the concentration of her name. This irreducibility conditions the play of the dialogic in a movement where the situations of each of these positions rupture the summary under one name.

The dialogic engagement in Saurav Chaliha's "Geometry"³ is of a different order. The concept of breach and friendship inform the ethics

in this story. The protagonists are all named by alphabets — A, friend of C and in amorous pursuit of B; C, friend-turned-rival of A; E, another pursuer; W, the eventual husband of B; and Á and Æ, the eventual wives of A and C respectively. The relationship between the friends — A and C — is one that exemplifies the potential volatility of the concept of ‘friendship’, a relationship that brings its political nature to the surface once B enters as the agent of the ‘breach.’ Let us examine two passages, one before and the other after the ‘breach’:

Passage 1:

A excitedly talks about B and C listens quietly. Initially C did give his friend some reasonable advice, but gradually C became silent.... In anticipation A sweats in the heat, like Yama’s messenger with the sinner, C too sweats along... ‘Should I send a letter?’ A seeks his friend’s advice. ‘Have patience’, said C, who favoured correspondence. (Chaliha 2001: 35-36)

Passage 2:

A: “Is this your friendship? Fraud!”
 C: (trying to cover his sense of guilt) — “What’s my fault brother? I’m just a puppet in the hands of an invisible force.”
 A: (in a repulsive tone) “Aren’t you ashamed?”
 C: (indifferent, trying to defend his position) “Just think, I’ve been your friend for so long, could I have done this by my own will? You are misunderstanding me.” (Chaliha 2001: 37)

As Derrida suggests, the breach in the friendship is the breach of the unspoken, the deconstruction of silence. A supposedly innocuous “experience” as friendship, as Derrida has shown, is extremely value-laden and multidimensional in its political implication. For instance, articulating the inherent conflictual potential of friendship, Derrida writes: “Friendship does not keep silence, it is preserved by silence. From its first word to itself, friendship inverts itself. Hence it says, saying this to itself, that there are no more friends; it avows itself in avowing that. Friendship tells the truth — and this always better left unknown. The protection of this custody guarantees the truth of friendship, its ambiguous truth, that by which friends protect themselves from the error or the illusion on which friendship is founded — more precisely, the

bottomless bottom founding a friendship, which enables it to resist its own abyss." (Derrida 1997: 53)

In this story B becomes the agent of intervention, inaugurating a dialogic play where the friendship becomes the site, the theatre, the register that confronts the appeal to responsibility. I mentioned earlier that the dialogic evident in "Geometry" is of a different order. It is clear that multi-voicedness does not operate here as the agency of dialogism; in fact the narrative is structured to present the positionality of each subject, not through dialogue in dramatic terms, but through a process of articulation that signals the embeddedness of interactivity. As a subject in the narrative, B is always the figured Other, one whose lack of speech marks her being only through inter-action. This is done within a framed matrix of the triangle, a geometric configuration that depends for its very existence upon the interaction of each of the three sides. With room for extension beyond the three sides of the triangle (D is college, and A, B, and C are also the points where the houses of the three of them are placed), the interaction is not just between subjects but also an involvement of spaces. The triangle is more than the association affecting the relationships; it is the map of the space where the subjects are at play. We may use the term "site for the inter-play of events" to describe the narrative space of Chaliha's stories.⁴ The narrative spaces of Chaliha's stories are then sites where the ludic operates, where the subject and the subjected engage to problematize the conventions of fiction itself.⁵ While the problematization of narrative in Chaliha's fiction is accepted the question of its dialogicality requires advocacy. Even though the restrictions of space do not permit a more sustained enquiry into the dialogic engagement in other Chaliha stories, we may describe the interactive condition of his fiction to be anti-monologic, a condition that resists the narrator self's 'unilateral imposition'.⁶ The subject-positions in Chaliha's stories are wrought to challenge the unilaterality of monologic discourse; and if they submit this condition of positionality to the test of the ethical, such an exercise is not always couched within discernible either/or alternatives.

The Other-function becomes important here. But instead of taking up another Chaliha story for discussion, I would like to examine Chaliha's metaphor of otherness as a guarded condition, one that Chaliha is so protective about,⁷ and one that has become the myth and subject of

fiction in another short story “Meeting Gaurav Chaliha”⁸ by Harekrishna Deka. In “Meeting Gaurav Chaliha”, Chaliha’s otherness informs the narrative in an intertextual play, an elusive otherness that nevertheless impinges the fiction/fact structure. The narrator and his friend in “Meeting Gaurav Chaliha”, fascinated by the stories of Gaurav Chaliha, are desperate to meet him, but when the real opportunity comes, even the knowledge of the ‘reality’ of the otherness of the pseudonym prevents the transgression. What is the cause of this action? Respect. Respect for the otherness, for the façade whose actuality is granted space in the public domain through the process of circulation and acceptance. It does not really matter if the ‘real’ person behind Gaurav Chaliha can be physically known or not — for the ‘real’ cannot supplant the symbolic, the status of *being* Gaurav Chaliha is not concentrated within the person of Narendra Nath Medhi (the person writing under Gaurav Chaliha’s name in this story). Gaurav Chaliha’s status is determined through the agency of the stories that carry his name.⁹ The actual becomes the sign and site of *artifactuality*.¹⁰ a condition of interactivity where the cultivated artifice acquires an identity of its own in the space of the actual. The dialogue between artifice and fact is continuously engaged as the narrator tries to negotiate his desire to *know* the ‘real’ Gaurav Chaliha and also respond respectfully to the otherness that grants the fabrication its operating space. By deciding to submit to the ethics of preservation the narrator commits to conform to the logic of the adopted name; if, on the other hand, the narrator’s desire were taken to its extreme, the violence then done would have disengaged the adopted name from its context of the stories and situate it within the ‘real’ person. Such an act would have been a violation, an ethical rape of the Gaurav Chaliha institution, and by not submitting to his desire, the narrator takes a stand — one that recognises the dialogic element inherent in the Gaurav Chaliha mark, and one that acknowledges the importance such a stand has for the Other.

Prabinda, now looking at me, said, “Do you recognise him? He is —”, Before Pranbinda’s sentence could end, the man said, ‘I am Narendra Nath Medhi. I am a Professor in Engineering College.’ His eyes were again at the distance.

I wanted to say, ‘Aren’t you Gaurav Chaliha’, but I stopped. Prabinda winked. Meaning don’t ask further. Prabinda and the man went ahead.

Prabinda turned towards 'Delight'. Narendra Nath Medhi towards the Engineering College bus stand.

I understood that I would never be able to meet Gaurav Chaliha in person. Maybe Narendra Nath Medhi. Then what would I do? There's a path ahead of me. That path goes through the stories of Gaurav Chaliha. (Deka 2001: 14)

In responding to the institution of Gaurav Chaliha in accordance with the terms determined by the mechanics of the pseudonym the narrator chooses to be responsible *for* the Other. More than being responsible for his own action, he here owns responsibility for that which has no bearing on him at all." 'Gaurav Chaliha' as a name invokes for the narrator the person of Narendra Nath Medhi, but no substitution is possible; it will always remain a dialogic engagement, a dialogue where the unspoken will direct the ethical conduct, and any attempt to unsettle the silence will imply violence to the Other.

NOTES & REFERENCES

1. All references to the texts of Saurav Kumar Chaliha are from *Soi Dakhakar Galpa* [Stories of Six Decades (1940-2000)], Guwahati Students' Stores, 2001. All translations are mine. "Doesn't Even Let Sleep" was first published in *Asom Batori*, Puja Special Issue, 8 October 1967.
2. A term such as "straight monologic discourse", however, must be taken provisionally and in the context of conventional terminology. In Bakhtin's view (Yakubinsky's views situated as the epigraph of the present paper is one such exposition) no utterance can be monologic, one of the reasons for a formulation like that being the trap of essentialism that "monologism" could succumb to.
3. "Geometry", written in 1950, is from the writer's first short story collection titled *Ashanta Electron* (Guwahati: Barua Book Agency, 1962). Structured as a love story, in fact, a triangular love story, "Geometry" deals with the attempts of A and C to win the love of B. The two aspirants are also college students but they are hardly interested in studies, and idle away their time in the pursuit of B. When the pursuit begins, A falls in love with B, and C occupies the position of A's guide. Midway through the pursuit A discovers that C too is 'flirting' with his prospective amour and then begins the story of conflict between erstwhile friends. E, another figure in the configuration, emerges to clarify that he too was once fascinated by B, but though they are now good friends, B, he suggests, is inaccessible.

All three of them — A, C, and E — fail in their exams. E commits suicide; A and C (now good friends once again) face oblivion. B marries W and A and C marry Á and Æ respectively. The story ends with A going to play cards with C and thinking about Euclid's theorem (I.20) that says: 'the sum of any two sides of a triangle is greater than the third one.'

4. Harekrishna Deka's term; my translation, in consultation with Deka. He uses it to describe Saurav Kumar Chaliha's narrative technique, even though he does not specify its 'dialogic' character (Deka 2000: 8).
5. See Ranjit Kumar Dev Goswami, "Saurav Kumar Chaliha" *Gariyosi* Vol. III, No. 5, February 1996, pp. 89-93. Commenting on Chaliha's thematic concerns Dev Goswami writes: "Thus, if modernism is considered to be the culmination of Enlightenment philosophy, then instead of confining Saurav Kumar Chaliha's writings within it (i.e., modernism), they may also be seen as an intensive critique of that philosophy." My translation. (90).
6. Dev Goswami's coinage; my translation, in consultation with Dev Goswami. (Dev Goswami 1996: 89)
7. Saurav Kumar Chaliha is the pseudonym of Surendra Nath Medhi. Medhi is extremely protective of the otherness of 'Saurav Kumar Chaliha' and refuses to synonymize both.
8. "Meeting Gaurav Chaliha" dramatises the narrator and his friend's futile attempts to 'know' Gaurav Chaliha. But even though one may meet the person who writes under that pseudonym, 'Gaurav Chaliha' will always be physically absent, for his existence is framed only within the narratives that carry his name. (Deka 2001: 1-14). The translation of the quoted passage is mine.
9. Note Heidegger's view regarding the artist-work relation: "On the usual view, the work arises out of hand and by means of the activity of the artist. But by what and whence is the artist what he is? By the work, for to say that the work does credit to the master means that it is the work that first lets the artist emerge as a master of his art. The artist is the origin of the work. The work is the origin of the artist. Neither is without the other. Nevertheless, neither is the sole support of the other. In themselves and in their interrelations artist and work *are* each of them by virtue of a third thing which is prior to both, namely that which also gives artist and work of art their names— art." (Heidegger 2000: 80)
10. Derrida's term. (Derrida 2002: 110)
11. "Responsibility for the Other" is a Levinasian orientation. Commenting on responsibility, Levinas states: "I understand responsibility as responsibility for the Other, thus as responsibility for what is not my deed, or for what

does not even matter to me; or which precisely does matter to me, is met by me as face." (Levinas 1985: 95)

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LITERATURE: COMPARATIVE, GLOBAL OR PLANETARY? A CRITIQUE OF SOME AMERICAN (MAINLY POSTCOLONIAL) POSITIONS

On the present occasion,¹ the manifold, but actually basic interrogation stems from two sets of documents that acutely illustrate the tenor of an all-defined controversy between mainly, but not exclusively Anglophone scholars, about the present and future of Comparative Literature: is it dead or dying, can it be revived, as it worth reviving etc.? This is not just an old sea monster, but a dangerous mutant.

One of these sets is a series of three lectures given in May 2000 at the University of California, Irvine, by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak under the auspicious title of 'A New Comparative Literature',² later modified and expanded for publication in May 2003 at Columbia University Press under the flamboyant title *Death of a Discipline* (by which Comparative Literature, 'whatever it is' was recast as a travelling salesman).

The second set, not yet fully published or quotable, is a number of drafts for the 2004 ACLA decennial report. The five drafts that I refer to were downloaded from the ACLA website; they are respectively by Emily Apter, David Damrosch, Djelal Kadir, Richard Rorty and Katie Trumpener. They all refer to Prof. Spivak's book, and some of them discuss it at length, making it central to the problem, the predicament and the validity or not of comparative literary studies today. Among the five pieces, Richard Rorty treats the whole thing with an elegant detachment that borders on academic dandyism: fifty years down the road, accounts of the nature of the discipline of comparative literature written with Spivak in mind will sound as quaint as those written with Wellek in mind do now. If they do not, then something will have gone wrong not because there is anything wrong with Spivak, but because no healthy humanistic discipline ever looks the same for more than a generation or two. Rorty insists that fashions are good to alleviate the

boredom of old readings, but he deliberately fails to address the more haunting question: the looming end of literature or of literature as we know it (John Hillis Miller) together with the kind of speculative thinking we had come to call the humanities. It is difficult to determine whether his deep distrust of methods and theory is counterbalanced by a faith in the inertia of academic institutions or in the continuity of playful intelligence.

On the other hand, all the drafts under examination, including Rorty, somehow converge in making, if implicitly, the essential point that, whatever the present and future of Comparative Literature, it is now coextensive with literary studies at large, thus taking *de facto* for granted the unification of affective, intuitive, analytical and critical literary cognition as well as literary history and literary theory, and the virtual existence at least of a unified literary field at an anthropological scale. The lines of dissent and the shock waves of contradiction that crisscross and upset the literary landscape are no longer arrested by reified epistemological, historical or geographical borders; or rather, the borders, if any, are drawn, effaced and redrawn by the play of consensus and dissent; they appear and disappear in the process of reading and unreading, canonizing and rejecting, interpreting and misinterpreting; they are constructed as mobile tools and used as vehicles across an ever reshaped discursive and aesthetic space occupied by the practice of cultural products.

But how should we read this apparent double unification of objects and their processing? As acknowledgement of the fact of cultural globalization? As yet another manifestation of Western imperialism? As a conquest or revenge of the subaltern getting equal or more than equal attention? As the revival of an old universalist illusion? As a dissolving or a dissolve of all the specificities that make literature possible and reading worthwhile? In brief, does it mean the achievement of the Enlightenment project of (World) literature or the emptying out of literature from within, or both? There are so many answers that we run the risk, beyond rich productive ambiguity, to fall into muddy indeterminacy, unless we ask each scholar what status he/she assigns to American in American Comparative Literature, or, conversely, to the absence of national or other geopolitical determinant in plain Comparative Literature.

Language, being man-made, is not innocent or guilty, but we are politically accountable for its uses and abuses to our fellow speakers, such as the scholarly community, students and the general public, i.e. concrete living people in whatever society they happen to belong to. It is fascinating to observe how word order in English, combined with genderless nouns, makes it possible, although not necessary, to derive such a revealingly meaningless concept as American Comparative Literature or US Comp. Lit. as Gayatri Spivak puts it, from American (Comparative Literature) Association. The Indian Association is called CLAI, the French one SFLGC (Société Française de Littérature Générale et Comparée), their names read as those of branches of a wider, international organization and stress the discipline rather than its national locus.

Gayatri Spivak, responding to a similar critique of the narrow scope of her book (narrow because imperial), writes with a mixture of feigned innocence and sad irony: *Death of A Discipline* is, of course, a book about US Comp. Lit.: I have never taught anywhere else for any length of time. You remind me how different the scene is in Europe. A real comparativist would have known.³ The curious implication that teaching is the only way to learn subtends another two, even stranger assertions, if I take her words literally: that Comp. Lit. is at all possible in a single cultural setting and from such a singular hegemonic standpoint as the American overarching one, while real Comp. Lit. would be a comparison of (teaching) scenes, rather than the participative experiment of multiple scenes of comparison.

Back to base 1: 'Literature: Comparative or Otherwise?'

Literature as a body of texts, or literature as recognized in/projected onto any particular text to inform the construction of meaning and representational value, is composite, internally heterogeneous, made of different displaced discourses and semiotically transgressive elements, a characteristic shared with other artistic and non-artistic productions, but deliberately amplified by a partly specific array of rhetorical devices in order to produce a residual polysomic effect, a freedom of interpretation effect, and keep the (serious) game of communication open and going. As unfinished composition and unending semiosis, literature, as well as the methods of study that want to be modelled on this object, can and

will be comparative every time its component discourses, codes, signifiers and practices are placed on a par.

When the discipline of comparative literature was understood, in one of its traditions, still well exemplified by Ulrich Weisstein in the sixties, as embracing the literary productions of two or several nations, it demanded that they be recognized as a priori equal. This is why they could only be European or Western, according to the prejudiced colonial mind and, obviously, that could be and often was a mere judiciary, formal precondition for adjudicating cases of ownership and conflicting self-claimed value.

The conjunction of postcolonial theory with Comp. Lit. is not however exempt from similar pitfalls: it can build a new façade of equality (similar to the one nation, one vote principle in the UN General Assembly), while the real decisions will be made by and for an oligarchy of great powers; it can reduce each national, regional or otherwise community-specific literature to inconvertible currency, autarky, intransitive subsistence economy; it can further humiliate and disable small, minor, peripheral, threatened, subordinate and emergent literatures by confining them to scheduled castes and isolated ghettos on the pretext of affirmative action. In order to compare, one must divide. One initial highly positive move of postcolonial critical theory is to divide empires, that is, divide the subjugated from the dominant. But the next move has rarely been to unite the separated *socii* against their only common foe: the forces of division that were instilled by the dominant to reign over them. Postcolonial critical theory, as exemplified by established token opponents of Empire may well perpetuate the divisive gesture that subtended all the imperial peace models of the past. Under the guise of advanced autonomization, it will proceed with the atomization of protracted analysis, the deferral of unifying action, and eschew the advent or return of an undivided anthropological dimension. Conversely, it can advocate frightful league models of pseudo-unification as seen in pan-Arabic, pan-Islamic, pan-African concepts that reiterate the foundational violence of pan-German unity, among others. In any case, the act of comparison, that can be carried out at any scale and between any number of sets, with a preference for nearby *loci* of differentiation and factual relations, such as influence, acculturation and liberation, may contribute to further identity concerns at the expense of new conquered freedom.

In other terms, comparison could achieve parity if and only if it were carried out, historically and presently, from as many centers as there are possible divided objects to compare. American Comparative Literature, clad as American postcolonial critique has definitely not helped to do that.

Does it mean then, that Literature is, should be or cannot but be global rather than comparative?

Back to base 2: 'Literature: Global or Otherwise?'

In a global setting, whether it is considered as an inescapable reality or a working hypothesis, there arise two extreme, opposite possibilities of cultural array/disarray:

One. A fictional illustration of the first kind of settlement can be found in the insect figure of Woody Allen in the film *Antz*: under the totalitarian duress of Big Brother law of profit (delocalization, exodus, diaspora, abolition of differences by general intellectual and representational disenfranchisement), comparison is made impossible because all objects in the world scale concentration camp are identical or nearly identical; any potential remnant or rebel singularity becomes not only eccentric but aberrant and unintelligible, it will ultimately be eradicated, like individual fictional characters in a Martian allegorical tale by Ray Bradbury. Comparison does not need to be censored or forbidden: it is barred by absolute seaminess. That was the fear already expressed by Auerbach in 1952 when he noted that the visionary concept of *Weltliteratur* (for it transcends national literatures without destroying their individualities) was severely jeopardized by the one-world syndrome, the process of imposed uniformity. And herewith the notion of *Weltliteratur* would be at once realized and destroyed.⁴

Two. A fictional illustration of the second kind of settlement can be found in the idyllic vision of American success stories provided by the autobiography of Mr. Hilton, the hotel tycoon: in the free-for-all of systemic deregulation, where not only the best will win but all will profit by the winner winnings, a total market place that extends not only to the confines of geographical space but to those of historical time viewed as a flattened archive (literary furniture, old and new, from everywhere), all objects and events (works, acts of communication and interpretation) are absolutely different within the collective transcendence of the whole.

Comparison is once again impossible, due to absolute difference of essence and criterion.

This is more or less the pessimistic vision developed by Djelal Kadir in the conclusions of his 2004 ACLA report paper:

And distance rather than nearness, individuation rather than collectivity, solipsism rather than communion, unbridgeable contestation rather than conversation are of optimal usefulness to regimes of terror.

Terror and the sublime as close kins. But are we finally caught in this dilemma, determined by this double bind? Is there no choice but to fall for mass sameness or anarcho-individualistic solitude and one-übermannship?

Back to base 3: 'Literature : Planetary or Otherwise?' or Eccentric vs. *Ek*-centric

Gayatri Spivak, while undersigning the demise of old Comparative Literature founded, according to her, by fugitives from European totalitarian regimes, pleads for a new Comparative Literature reinvigorated by an injection from renewed Area Studies. A valid implication of the move away from Western centered *Weltliteratur* could be that totalitarianism being global, there is no longer any escape from it in space, but her escape in time is highly metaphorical and regressive, very much in the same way as the nativistic rooting of 20th century totalitarian regimes always was. On the other hand, what she calls planetarity in a few rather enigmatic propositions at the end of her book, seems to consist mainly in two tenets: the rejection of any 'universalism' (all universalisms being, according to her, European masks for colonial imperialism and bringing about enslaving globalization in their ultimate stage), and the spreading out of the fields opened up by Cultural and Postcolonial Studies:

All my examples so far have been postcolonial, tied to New Immigrant groups in the United States... It seems to me that a planetary Comparative Literature must attempt to move away from this base... [I hope it] will touch the older minorities: African, Asian, Hispanic. It will take in its sweep the new postcoloniality of the post-Soviet sector and the special place of Islam in today breaking world. ... The old postcolonial model very much Indian plus the Sartrian Fanon will not serve now as the master model for transnational to global cultural studies on the way to planetarity. We are dealing with heterogeneity on a different scale... (84-85)

This strategy of expansion obviously needs to be questioned insofar, among other things, as it mimicks very closely American conquest of new markets and American outsourcing. I have noted elsewhere that it is also tainted with exceptionalism as far as Islam is concerned, since modern Islamist movements display global strategies of domination and uniformization that mirror in a very mechanical way those of American imperialism. The parallel could end up where it began: planetarity appearing as a direct product of American will-to-hegemony, an unimaginative, literalist response to it.

One could say that, contrary to fatherlandless global capitalism and its wandering financial assets, planetarity is grounded on community taken as what it means to live together in the same place, community, appearing as Nature, since it produces culture and is not produced by it, according to GCS. But this hopeful, positive view of 'planetarity' is contradicted by the fact that the American model of global expansion is ideologically and practically based on a very archaic, patriotic and prophetic view of we the people whose appropriating power has long proven to be stronger than all efforts at liberation on the part of the oppressed minorities (or majorities). Martin Luther King's speech, *I have a dream*, has soon been turned into just another *I have an American dream*.

Kadir, the least (North) American of the contributors to the ACLA report, writes:

Spivak, for her part, in pursuit of what she terms the specificity of the autochtone (14) and exemplary singularity (22), betrays a peculiar form of nostalgia and, hence, the necessity of a return to the linguistic and cultural particularity that underwrote area studies, with whose revival and collaboration she envisions a 'new Comparative Literature' (21), with which she would have us supersede the 'monolingual, presentist, narcissistic' (20) acgis of cultural studies.

One would be hard-pressed to find a comparatist who would argue against the supersession of monolingualism, presentism, and narcissism. The difficulty in the historical moment of 2004 is to differentiate between multilingualism and forked tongues, historical scope and self-serving historicism, non-narcissist self-effacement and self-critique as cloak of invisibility.

I have also noted this allegiance to supposedly historical, pre-capitalistic residual pockets considered as authentic communities. In a globalized capitalist world, just as in a globally commodified system of discourses, no community is immune to the destructive, lethal logic of the system. If exclusion is a function of the system, inclusion will also be a function of the system; the system does have an unquestionable self-proclaimed identity and sticks to it. As Djelal Kadir again puts it forcefully:

the true American Comparative Literature now reverts back to its first term to be, foremost and perforce, like the rest of the planet in 2004, American ... Spivak's recuperation of it as alternative to globalization I propose the planet to overwrite the globe (72), planetarity is the shrink-wrapped version of the longitudinally and latitudinally bounded gridwork of globalization.

If "Literature" therefore is to suffer equally from being comparative (in the supposedly old and new acceptations of the term), global or planetary, could we not leave it alone, free of determinants, adjectives and other qualifiers? And then what would such a stark lack of specification of the general involve as to our practice of the art, our participation in a threatened but 'ongoing conversation'?

To conclude, I shall submit two propositions in the form of mock laws. The paradox and mockery are intended to prevent anyone from taking these propositions as a plan or even a program, but a possible way to maximize the benefits of a serious game (a game with too high human stakes to trust it to any individual or any institutional 'scene', let alone the 'classroom'):

1) FIRST LAW, or the side-stepping principle: 'There is no original', or if you wish, 'there is no source text, there are only translation'. This is not because multiple, simultaneous or successive translations could circle closer and closer to some central meaning, to some essential Truth of the text. On the contrary, the translation principle relies on the erroneous character, the ruthless literality, the rogue rootlessness of all translations. Translation is not even treason (for there is nothing to betray), it is creative error and random, accidental creation, very similar in that to the formation of our material universe and the development of life forms. I would propose that, in the mode of movies

with a multilingual cast, we read any text as if it had no original version, no birthright (this is why studying *Gilgamesh* or other ancient and lost, fragmentary, linguistically scattered texts is so stimulating). Desacralizing the text, doing away with identity and legitimacy in one gesture does not mean banalizing the text or making it fungible, on the contrary it is a way of circulating it and historicizing it, practically asserting its currency. Applications and exercises in the present globalized context: read multiple translations of Homer, Shakespeare or Kabir, rather than Homer in Greek and so on; read Shakespeare in English as if it were freely translated from a range of other languages, preferably non-European (why not, if Kalidasa was labelled of yore the Indian Shakespeare?); translate whatever work back into the language it is supposed to be translated from, then compare...

2) SECOND LAW: 'Only ill-suited fellows can profitably live together' or 'Meaning results from apparent incompatibility'. I would like to call this the federative or no-monad principle, according to which radical alterity (of mores, symbolism, aesthetics, ethics or social structures) is impossible because it could not be thought as other from within and could not be understood from without. Meaning, we all know it, don't we, is relational, produced by a whole range of interlinked and/or uncorrelated differences. The melting pot is equivalent to the end of thinking. If this is the essence of the United States of America, it will pay for it sooner or later. Let us just hope that our substance will not be washed away by a flood of Coke in the process; let us fight to keep the Flood away. Conversely, rubbing shoulders with odd companions is the beginning of wisdom. Sometimes historical circumstance (the localization of resources and poverty, climatic events, the inertia of foundational myths in need of new uses) does produce an adequate framework for the federative principle, as I believe it may be the case in the multicultural context of South Asia (hence the special resilience and dynamics of Comparative Literature in India along with the necessity of Comparative Indian Literature). But sometimes this does not happen naturally: the task of the 'comparativist' will then be to invent and simulate artificial federations of texts, imaginary Indias of literature, with often shifting, multi-centered affinities, and as many incompatibilities for a good balance.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. This is a slightly revised version of a talk given by the author as a guest of SAP, Department of Comparative Literature, Jadavpur University, on June 30, 2004. All my thanks to the SAP and the Department for their kind invitation. For another approach, see also Didier Coste, "Is a Non-global Universe Possible? What Universals in the Theory of Comparative Literature (1952-2002) Have to Say about it", *Comparative Literature Studies*, Vol. 41, No. 1, 2004, pp. 37-48. Dr. Ipshita Chanda's review article on Gayatri Spivak's *Death of a Discipline*, 'Can the Non-Western Comparatist Speak?' has been most helpful for further thinking on the matter.
2. Web source: <http://sun3.lib.uci.edu/~scctr/Wellek/spivak/>
3. From an e-mail message to the author dated January 18, 2004, in response to my online review article 'Votum mortis', *Acta Fabula*, January 2004, www.fabula.org.
4. Auerbach, Erich. 'Philology and Weltliteratur' [1952]. Trans. Maire and Edward Said. *Centennial Review*, XIII.1 (1969): 1-17. Here, pp. 1 and 3.

MULTICULTURALISM: FORCED & NATURAL A COMPARATIVE LITERARY OVERVIEW

What I propose to present in the next few pages of my discussion may well seem orthodox, even regressive or reactionary to many or at best unnecessarily provocative to some. As a student of Comparative Literature, I am fully aware of almost periodic crises that befell the discipline. The idea of Comparative Literature or World Literature, as these terms were interchangeably used by comparatists during the early years of its existence, was ruthlessly confronted by the classicists in the academic circles, even though the methods and tools they deployed either on the diachronic or the synchronic plane were essentially comparative! It may be recounted here that contrary to popular perception, Comparative Literature as a discipline was instituted more than quarter of a century before the English Muse had come out of the fetters of Greek and Latin in universities like Oxford and Cambridge. Unfortunately — though the early masters of Comparative Literature considered it fortunate — the practice of Comparative Literature grew and developed silently without much publicity about it to a full-fathomed discipline to negotiate literary experiences of the past as well as of the present and had even had enough space left for the possible emerging literary encounters. It may not be a matter of mere coincidence that the rise of Comparative Literature and modern classical studies were not only simultaneous, but also co-terminous.

The anxiety and the urge at the root of the genesis of Comparative Literature was perhaps best summed up by Goethe even when he could not completely shed his allemagne superiority. Between 1827 and 1830, Goethe had perhaps been under the spell of an idea of World Literature. In a review of the German translation of Alexandre Duval's play *Le Tasse* in 1827, Goethe first spoke of his 'conviction that there is being formed a universal world literature'. On January 01, 1828, Goethe in a letter to Carlyle expressed his eagerness to know 'the relation of one

nation to another, ... which should be evaluated and known above all for the benefit of the dominant world literature.' Then again on the 31st of the same month, reading a Chinese novel, he confided to Eckermann his famous formulation, 'National Literature means little now; the age of *Weltliteratur* has begun.' He was keen on probing 'The mutual relationships between the elements of world literature' (Letter to Reinhardt, June 18, 1829.), when he was fully convinced that 'General world literature can only develop when nations get to know all the relations among all the nations.' (Notes for introduction to the German translation of Carlyle's *Life of Schiller*, 1830.) The repeated use of an emphatic 'all' may sound rather ebullient in consideration of the time the assertion was made, but it certainly exposes Goethe's non-discriminating position with regard to the power and status of the nations. It is true, for Goethe 'General' and 'Universal' were interchangeable terms; in absence of the term Comparative Literature which was coined nearly two decades later (1848), Goethe was happy with the combination World Literature by which he implied the common elements present in literature in general. Perhaps we cannot — and should not — expect critical exactness at such an embryonic state of an idea. The concept of Comparative Literature, then, right from the very beginning, was an inter-national and consequently, therefore, an inter-cultural one. To baptize Comparative Literature into Multiculturalism would, therefore, look like whitewashing a Makrana or an Alabama marble.

If we browse through the various stages of development of the discipline, we are confronted with multiple interventions made by different schools of critical thoughts on it. That Comparative Literature has a mammoth power of absorption in accommodating these and also in lending a kind of legitimacy to these is amply displayed in various epochs of comparative literary history. It is no wonder that starting from Marxism to the Postmodern, comparatists were the first to execute these in practice in the literary domain. The rise of Comparative Literature in France, Germany, Italy, the East European Slavic countries and the US or the relative resistance of the British academia in yielding place to it, was most certainly dictated by the compelling natural necessities of their literatures. The acceptance or rejection of some approaches adopted by it also indicates its natural choice. The basic difference between the French and American schools of Comparative Literature may be an

indicator of this freedom of choice in keeping with the natural inclinations of their literatures. Even under the wider umbrella of Marxist critical canons as applied to the Comparative Literature domain, quite fundamental differences between say Vasilovsky or Zhirmunsky and Durisin or Galik happily co-exist. These I prefer to call instances of natural selection according to internal affinities. In such cases the traces of otherness get dissolved in the chemical compound of a literature's own identity.

Of late a queer dichotomy seems to have gripped the Comparative Literature academicians. Could be because of an intense economic pressure on the state funding for education the world over, the weary academicians are out to catch at a straw to restructure their disciplines by christening these with culture studies. It may be quite natural for practitioners of single literature disciplines to be attracted to the idea of cultural location and dimension of a literary text or to relate the same to the wider vortex of literary systems as an uncommon practice in their insular circles. Till recently they were content with and proud of the *kulinism* of their literary pursuits, but something must have happened in the meanwhile for their volte-face. We may venture to see what the reasons could be.

For sometime now, we have observed that the literary domain in general and literary texts in particular have become the primary sources of social science research. Perhaps awed by the shattering failure of field research in the 60s of the last century, social scientists now are trying to anchor their wrecked ship by the coast of literature in a desperate bid to salvage the same. Naturally, not trained in either the art or the science of literary understanding, they are capable of picking up a text absolutely out of context, oblivious of any formal or thematic convention it might belong to. Conveniently they would posit the text as an exclusive product of the period or else as an imaginary tale. No grey shade between the two extremes are perceptible to them. This forced dissociation of a text from the wider context leads to a superimposition of certain tools totally alien to the creation of the text itself. This, to my mind, is symptomatic of a unipolar mindset greatly fostered by Globalisation in the aftermath of the fall of the USSR.

Yes, the contradiction is intended. Though Globalisation professes to lead towards a world of equal opportunity in economic and cultural areas alike, in reality it has turned out to be a forced acceptance of the

economic and cultural values of the power that be. Globalisation is imperialism in disguise. The recent hype for the Harry Potter release may be studied in that light.

Multiculturalism in the Globalisation era has been restructured to suit the latter's designs. Unlike the earlier natural multiculturalism, the present permutation of it is purely forced. The fissures between the two become all the more glaring once it comes to the question of identity — regional and national or the like. It has been nothing more than a mechanical mixture of the contributing cultures. It is interesting to note that the prophets of Globalisation talk of both in the same breath. Multiculturalism in that way has become a management apparatus. Management gurus have prescribed new packaging tags to the old concepts. Isn't the very term multicultural a refashioning of the old cosmopolitan? Or global. of universal? Of course, now to argue a point out one may attach new-fangled attributes to it, but till now the difference, if any, has not been pointed out in their discourses.

Culture Studies as ramified in the post-Glasnost era is the new discipline sponsored by the Multiculturalists under the aegis of Globalisation. One may even risk to say that, if Multiculturalism is the Glasnost, Culture Studies is its Perestroika and both come under the agenda of Globalisation.

To be more precise, the academia in the present era of Globalisation is accorded no better respect and value than any other product-manufacturing industry. Withdrawal of public sector subvention from such industries have either withered these up or have compelled to turn their orientations upside down. Such economic determinism may be one of the reasons behind professional comparatists' penchant for Culture Studies. There were, of course, sufficient indications of this possible change in the modified aims and objectives of the Comparative Literature discipline as such in Susan Bassnett's critical introduction to *Comparative Literature* (1993). The Bernheimer Report (1993) to the American Comparative Literature Association perhaps completes the cycle. (*Comparative Literature in the Age of Multiculturalism*, Johns Hopkins UP, Baltimore, 1995.) Thankfully for us, scholars of Comparative Literature are divided on the issue of its ultimate surrender to Culture Studies; Jonathan Culler, for example, in his response to the Report, has unequivocally confirmed his firm position:

French literature [he takes French as an example] is obviously a part of French culture, so let French departments become departments of French studies to examine it in this way; but it is also part of literature in general, and to study it as such, in all its ramifications, is the task — still daunting and requiring all the resources we can command — of comparative literature. (P. 121)

It will perhaps be foolhardy on our part to ignore the present crisis in Comparative Literature as a distant one. Signs of such a move are not imperceptible among the theory-savy, jargon-armoured scholars of Comparative Literature in India as well. Completely forgetful of the methods and tools of literary — especially comparative literary studies, some of our best Comparative Literature professionals have well nigh surrendered to the alluring aura of Culture Studies — an area too fluid to be defined and structured as a rigorous discipline. Or one may even sarcastically ask, is the rush towards Culture Studies a deliberate move away from the rigour of a discipline to a go-as-you-like arena? One may be reminded of Pares Babu's discomfort in grappling with concepts like tradition or culture in Satyajit Ray's *Paraś Pāthar*.

While Comparative Literature professionals are moving towards Culture Studies, in the present Indian academic scenario, the single literature disciplines are incorporating as much as they can the content of Comparative Literature. So far they have been concerned with the content alone, they are not bothered by the methodology or the tools of Comparative Literature without which it may be nearly impossible to establish any relation, however tentative that may be, between one text and another, or a text to a convention. And because of the job market shrinkage in the country, it may be quite naturally expected that such Single Literature departments' curricula will become a more respectable alternative to Comparative Literature proper.

On the other hand, if Comparative Literature courses in India are turned into Comparative Culture Studies, as some may have been toying with at the back of their minds, it runs the risk of a two-fold sacrifice: first, literature obviously would have a lesser share in the course content and second, the tested tools of Comparative Literature and the moulding tools of Culture Studies may not coalesce and even cause

disruption in the process of its study. There may be, however, the possibility of setting up of a School of Culture Studies where various areas of knowledge would form into several programmes leading to a comprehensive study of culture of the country. Though I am not an expert to pass any comment on the desirability or the feasibility of such a proposal, as a student of literature, I shall certainly feel deprived of the rightful place of literature in the comparative domain of multicultural studies.

